



ANTHROPOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA

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April 19, 2011

Dear Members and Friends,

Yesterday I returned to the U.S. after a week of meetings capped by the AGM in Dornach this past weekend. Although a more complete version may be possible for our next publication of *being human*, I am aware of how many members are waiting for news as soon as possible. So this summary is appearing on our web site and will go to all group and branch leaders today.

As I walked toward the Goetheanum on Saturday the 16th, people were swarming up the hill from all directions. The great hall began to fill as long lines wound their way down the stairs on each side. In the end, every seat was filled, and the overflow crowd was accommodated in the Grundstein Saal below, for a total of over 1250 people. The meeting opened with a brief selection of music and then Paul Mackay welcomed everyone and introduced the program. Sergej Prokofieff, Bodo v. Plato and Paul Mackay each gave a brief overview of their work and hopes for the present and future. Members then proceeded to take up the eleven motions — a process that lasted the better part of the next twelve hours.

During the General Secretaries meetings in the foregoing days, a decision was made to place the controversial second motion (no confidence) first on the AGM agenda, as it was the most far reaching and needed to be addressed early on. The sponsor of the motion gave an introduction, and then members were invited to speak. The General Secretaries had asked that Hartwig Schiller (Germany) and I speak on behalf of the General Secretaries. (This was my first occasion to speak in German in the hall! A translation of this talk will be in the next issue of *being human*.) There were perhaps a dozen who spoke before the motion was voted on. Also by pre-arrangement, we had decided not to contest the wish for a secret ballot, and that was indeed affirmed by a simple majority. We then went on to the actual casting of ballots, which were counted during the break. To the relief of the overwhelming majority, the final tally was: 11 invalid ballots, 156 abstaining, 257 voting *for* the motion of no confidence, and 876 voting *against* the motion.

Motion #1, regarding seven year terms and reaffirmation of Executive Council members, was approved. Then the three Vorstand members were put up for affirmation, and all three — Paul, Sergej and Bodo — were reaffirmed with substantial majorities. Motion #3 was no longer as relevant since the name Goetheanum had been removed by prior action of the Vorstand, but the remaining aspect of the name use was still debated. 372 voted yes and 492 no, meaning the members chose not to restrict the freedom of the Vorstand to determine the uses of the name.

The Weleda motion (#4) brought forth more heat than expected, with many doctors, former employees, and members speaking to the need to hold a special meeting to fully address the future of Weleda. From my perspective, there seems to be tension between the need to produce and maintain the quantity and quality of anthroposophical medications vs business survival and the dictates of the marketplace, which seems to favor the cosmetic line. Leading figures took different points of view,

but in the end the membership at the AGM voted to authorize a special meeting, to be scheduled at a future date, so as to more fully deal with the evolution of Weleda (note that the society remains a major shareholder).

Anthroposophy Worldwide will no doubt carry more on the other motions, most of which did not receive sufficient support to pass or were withdrawn. One of the reasons why the process took so long was that several times along the way there were procedural motions that had to be dealt with, as well as numerous speakers to each motion.

One key message that I brought from our membership was the issue of worldwide participation and voice in such crucial decisions. Paul Mackay introduced possibilities which the General Secretaries have only just begun to consider. They include options such as proxy votes, selecting delegates from each country, Skype or virtual participation, or having certain motions first go to the national societies before they go to the AGM in Dornach. There are pros and cons to each of these options. Some national societies have tried one or another option over the years, and the exploration is only just beginning. These questions go to the very heart of our work together worldwide and need to be considered carefully. There is also a growing sense that the circle of General Secretaries can play a stronger role in the future, referring to what Rudolf Steiner called the “expanded executive council”. We were certainly fortunate this last meeting to have country representatives join us as they usually do for the spring meeting, which added depth and breadth to our conversations.

We heard two moving reports from our friends in Japan and New Zealand. The earth quakes of recent months have changed the human as well as physical landscape of these two countries. From Japan we heard personal experiences of the quake. A scene was described where a group of 14 eurythmists, in full veils, joined the crowds on the streets of Tokyo during the initial quake; the fear of contamination in the weeks that have followed as the earth, air and water are poisoned; the dislocation and loss of so many lives. Added to this were the stories from Christchurch and the unfolding of the great mystery of human compassion. What struck me most was the interconnection of human destiny on earth as the General Secretaries made contributions to the presentations: there had been Japanese volunteers who were helping in New Zealand only to be called home when their own disaster struck. The events in Japan caused a sea change in the German political landscape with the Green Party (including some leading figures in the anthroposophical movement) receiving the most votes in regional elections. Sue Simpson spoke of the fund set up to provide therapy for New Zealand children experiencing trauma, and how contributions have flowed in from around the world.

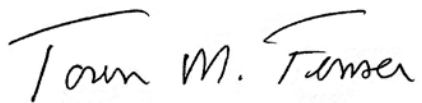
Before closing this report, I would like to also share one aspect of the 150th as reported by Bodo v. Plato in the General Secretaries meetings. He said that a year ago, he would have been happy if the recognition given to Rudolf Steiner in 2011 would have been half of what was accorded to the celebrations around Kant. To his delight and that of many members, the recognition given Rudolf Steiner has far exceeded our expectations. Full length articles have appeared in many newspapers and magazines, public conferences have been held (including a very successful one in Bologna attended by over 900 people, most of them not members), celebrations in towns around the world, resolutions

passed by governments etc. In his usual provocative way, Bodo then asked: What can we learn about ourselves from the images that the media have given us thus far this year? He went on to list four points, which could become the basis for member conversations:

1. There is almost universal agreement that the work of the movement, the practical results of anthroposophy as seen in Waldorf education, medicine, biodynamics, etc. is generally excellent. The movement in this year of the 150th has received high acclaim.
2. The image of Rudolf Steiner that emerges is of a remarkable man, someone hard to understand but a truly unusual person with exceptional gifts. The extensive biographies attest to the fact that one cannot reduce him to a mere news clipping -that his investigations are far reaching.
3. The message flowing back to us from the celebrations is that the Society is almost invisible, if not irrelevant.
4. The members are portrayed as somewhat strange.

These kinds of observations can spur us forward to really look at what we are doing, where we have been successful, and where we need to go in the future. How can the separate endeavors in the movement be better linked with each other and the Society? How can we foster the genuine human? In this time of budget cuts, how can we emphasize the vital contribution of the arts, such as speech and eurythmy, which are unique to our work? How can we support the work of the Goetheanum as a research and cultural center that goes far beyond the walls of the building itself? And finally, in light of our recent AGM and the social/political/human challenges around the world, how can we awaken to a new sense of community?

I hope these questions can weave through the work of our groups and branches in the months ahead as we work with renewed energy on realizing the potential of *Anthroposophy — Rosicrucianism in our time*, which serves not only as our theme of the year, but the challenge the world has given us today.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Torin M. Finser". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'T'.

Torin M. Finser