

Report

Meeting of the treasurers of the National Anthroposophical Societies

April 18 and 19 2011 at the Goetheanum

present:

Jerry Kruse (US), Max Rutgers (NL), Marc Desaulles (CH), Gerhard Anger (AT), Justus Wittich (DE), Alexander Thiersch (DE), Göran Nilo (SE), Sissel Jenseth (NO), Douglas Wylie (CA), Leena Westergrén (FI), partially Markku Maula (FI), Gudrun Cron (FR), Michiel Brave (IR), Eva Wasniewska (PL), Yuji Agematsu (JP), Grant Ovenstone (ZA), Sue Simpson (NZ), Michael Mösch (BR), Lucia Sigolo (BR), Hans von Florenstein Mulder (Asia), Norma Blackwood (AU), Cornelius Pietzner (on April 18), Paul Mackay, Hans Hasler

The meeting is held under the auspices of the Annual General Meeting of the Anthroposophical Society which took place two days before and the transition of the treasurers task from Cornelius Pietzner to Paul Mackay. Cornelius gave an overview of his nine years at the Goetheanum at the end of the first meeting day and describes his plans for the future work with the Alterra Social Impact Fund and the Alterra Foundation. Max Rutgers and Paul Mackay gave him a warm goodbye and thanked him.

We discussed in the first session the financial statements of 2010 and the balance sheets per December 31, 2010. The accounts show as it was the case in the last years a remarkable structural shortcoming which had again to be covered by extraordinary income and winding up of internal funds. (Further details see Goetheanum Web page, Financial report of the treasurer). The structural deficit made it finally compulsory to reduce the annual budget by approximately 4 Mio CHF.

The discussion of the budget 2011 showed that the aim to reach 4,575 Mio CHF of membership contributions is not realistic. Open questions concern also the co-workers pensions, the continuation of the Mystery Drama work and the art activities at the Goetheanum.

In more than one session we discussed the membership contributions sent by the national societies to the Goetheanum. The treasurers of various countries describe the difficulties to reach the figures aimed for. Years ago an index of the amount per member for each national society to be sent to the Goetheanum was introduced. This index was partially actualized in the last years, but has to be looked at anew. Many national societies do not reach the actually stated amounts of the index. In order to get an idea about the members' dues in each country, what percentage of these dues are transferred to the Goetheanum and what is the percentage of the transferred contributions in relation to the whole budget of the national societies we add a questionnaire to this report. The overview of the answers to this questionnaire will be reported again to the treasurers. The small treasurers group described below will further work on the index and submit suggestions.

On request of the participants statistics which show the number of individual members directly connected to the Goetheanum per country and their payments will be added to the statistics of the members and contribution payments per national society presented.

The members want to know what for the members' dues are used. There is much goodwill and financial means; to transfer them to the Goetheanum we are in need of a good communication and connection between the Goetheanum and the worldwide initiatives. In all questions of financing we should ask:

- what for? which is the direction?
- are the goals realistic?
- can they be communicated?

Depending on the country the need for information is rather different. The examples of Germany and Brazil show clearly the range: German members are longing for visions, seven year plans, clear goals; in Brazil it is more important to experience what human beings are supported by the contributions. From Poland we hear the wish that as many members as possible should have the opportunity to visit the Goetheanum at least once in their life. This would need support and goodwill from the Goetheanum. Hans von Florenstein Mulder points out the lack of consciousness that there is an anthroposophical society existing; even students having gone through an anthroposophical training do not necessarily know about the society.

Paul Mackay gives a report about the newly formed small group of treasurers which had met on March 7 for the first time: Max Rutgers (NL), Daniel Håkanson (DK), Justus Wittich (DE), Marc Desaulles (CH), Gerhard Anger (AT), Hans Hasler und Paul Mackay. The group has the intention to meet two-three times a year. Gerhard Anger will not continue, he decided to hand over the treasurers task of the Society in Austria. Hans Hasler participates in the work as assistant to Paul Mackay in the finance department. Paul Mackay wants to cooperate with this small group in order to have a forum for intense discussions and decision making. This work should also help to better hear the voice of the members. The group can be enlarged in particular situations ad hoc or on longer term. The meeting unanimously welcomes the formation of this small group. Regular reports will be given about its work.

At the beginning of the second day Paul Mackay describes the first priorities he determines for his work:

1. Contributions of the national societies, questions of the index, percentage of the contributions of the total budget of the national societies.
2. Development of a view how different are the financing qualities of the day to day costs, particularly in regard to the next budget:
 - Level of payments in return for services provided, such as performances or conferences, guided tours, publications - comparable with the physical level of the visible world
 - Level of the basic conditions for facilitating the work: buildings, infrastructure, basic framework for the activities as the work of secretaries, section leaders, administration, stage - comparable with the basic life conditions, the etheric level, financed by members' dues.
 - Level of projects which have a particular goal within a time frame - astral level, financed by designated gifts.
 - Level of free allowances which enable particular initiatives, unforeseen expenses, renewal - financed by free gifts and legacies - comparable with the level of the ego.

The transparency project which was elaborated by Benjamin Kohlhasse and Cornelius Pietzner has to be reviewed in connection with the next budget.
3. Analysis in-depth of the assets and liabilities of the balance sheet.
4. Next big maintenance project: roof, concrete walls and terrace of the Goetheanum.
5. Good connections to foundations and other finance sources.
6. Questions of membership in the society: what are the situations in the national societies, individual members, possibility of creating a institutional membership supporting the society without voting rights.

Some points discussed in connection with these ideas:

The members expect a better information about the use of their contributions. Much is depending on whether or not we can create a basis of confidence. The lack of confidence shows up immediately in the flow of money. Visitors who come often to the Goetheanum are

very sensitive to the atmosphere in the Goetheanum. It is important that the members can have the impression that there is a good co-operation between national societies and the Goetheanum.

Should the financing of the Goetheanum not be much more the task of the national societies than the problem of the Goetheanum itself? As far as we are members of the School of Spiritual Science we are connected to each other around the world. But in regard to the Goetheanum as the physical building situated in Dornach the geographical distance is of importance in regard to the willingness of financial participation even if the Goetheanum has a particular importance as focus and crystallization point of the School of Spiritual Science.

What is the task of the national societies in financing Section activities in their countries?

The following question is lively discussed: are the national societies free to determine their contributions to the Goetheanum or do the contributions have more the character of a contractual obligation? Looking at the Christmas Foundation Meeting the payment of members' dues is a duty, but today many friends look at the contribution as to a question of free consideration. Many years ago the Goetheanum sent out invoices for the membership fees, today we just rely on the goodwill of all treasurers to do the best they can... Of course we have to take into account the particular situation of each country. Thus we cannot stipulate fixed amounts, but to work with guidelines.

Douglas Wylie from Canada speaks about the tax authorities to which must be shown that the Goetheanum is part of the program, that the Goetheanum is a task of the national society. In Switzerland the General Anthroposophical Society has a charitable tax status. This status is acknowledged in the United States.

Towards the end of our meeting we discussed further priority questions, how to relate as partial owner to the Weleda, the renovation of roof, concrete and terrace of the Goetheanum and of information problems. All participants, particularly Paul Mackay and the small group of treasurers go home with lots of homework.

Next meeting of the treasurers: Monday, April 2 to Tuesday April 3, 2012

For the report

Hans Hasler