THE LIFE STYLE MOVEMENT: A Commitment to Personal Change

The **LIFE STYLE MOVEMENT** is a network of people in this country and abroad who have committed themselves to living more simply. We do this as a step towards improving the conditions of those who have no choice other than to live simply, and also as a direct response to the environmental crisis.

Our motto is:-

LIVE SIMPLY THAT ALL MAY SIMPLY LIVE

The movement seeks to raise the consciousness of people in Britain and other wealthy nations, to make us all aware that in a world of finite resources there is a direct link between our affluence and the poverty of others. Only when a sufficient number of people among the worlds 'haves' begin to husband the earths' resources and work for a fairer distribution of those resources to the 'have-nots' can we hope for a full and satisfactory life for the human family for present and future generations.

If there is to be a more equitable sharing of the worlds' limited resources, then the affluent countries must consume less. Britain, among others, must therefore adopt a way of life which is less dependent on consumerist values.

Life Style is based upon three principles:

- That everyone has a natural right to sufficient food, warmth, shelter and privacy; and to live free from oppression and other discriminations;
- That each of us has an individual responsibility of care towards our fellow beings, and to the planet; and that we each accept our share of responsibility for the world

as it is now, and also for what it will be like in the future;
- That everything we do, however small, has an impact on our fellow human beings and upon the environment.

Other organisations may share these basic principles, but the particular emphasis of LIFE STYLE is that change begins with oneself. Personal integrity demands that before asking others to change their way of life, and before campaigning for legislated changes in society, we should change our own lifestyle to one which is less exploitative of the planet and its' peoples.

Although change begins with oneself, it does not end there. Many members of LIFE STYLE are active within groups working for justice and an ecologically sustainable society.

Living simply can also free money and resources for overseas development. However, it is not enough to give money to overseas relief agencies, important though that may be in an emergency. We must also recognise that as part of the global village, the pattern of demand we create by the food we eat and the articles we buy, may confirm the fact of world hunger and environmental degradation to a far greater extent than our charity may help to alleviate it.

For example, the world produces enough grain to give each person 3,000 calories a day, without counting beans and vegetables. This would provide enough protein, energy and essential vitamins and minerals for everyone if distributed fairly. But in Britain our high-meat diet is wasteful. We feed two-thirds of our grain to livestock, which can produce as little as one pound of meat (in the case of beef) for every fifteen pounds of grain consumed.

We also consume huge quantities of luxury crops, such as tea, coffee, sugar and tobacco. These cash crops are bad for our health and take up, world around, enough land to feed the

worlds' hungry several times over. The refinement, packaging, marketing and distribution of these products uses valuable resources which would be better employed in providing for the basic needs for the majority of the human family. Furthermore, the protection of the sources of supply of essential raw materials, energy and trade routes is one of the factors leading to international instability and the huge expenditure on armaments. Only when our pattern of living becomes more ecological shall we become less threatening to, and feel less threatened by, people in other parts of the world.

LIFE STYLERS therefore tend to cut out or cut down on their consumption of meat (especially beef), tea, coffee and tobacco, etc., and make a conscious effort to save energy and non-renewable resources. Many find that repairing and re-cycling household goods not only frees resources for the production of goods for those in desperate need, but gives them the added bonus of learning and applying new skills. As an old New England saying goes:-

"Make it do / Make it last / Use it up / Or go without"

It is not easy to change old habits, and members of LIFE STYLE Movement readily admit that they often fall short of their ideals. However, the movement provides a sense of shared commitment, and members give each other support and encouragement through a Newsletter and at local and national meetings. There are no rules for members, only guidelines, and there is no competition to outdo each other in the way in which we put into practice and fulfill our LIFE STYLE commitment. Individuals and groups adapt and develop the guidelines according to their skills and circumstances.

Personal attempts to live more responsibly may seem hopelessly inadequate in the face of the enormous problems besetting mankind and the planet. But such efforts are among

the most significant of actions, because ultimately no strategy for justice and survival can succeed unless everyone actually behaves as a citizen of a just and sustainable world.

According to an ancient Chinese proverb, “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness”. By living more simply you will have lit a candle; and from one lighted candle another candle can be lit, and then another.