



# The Right Livelihood Award

*for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people*

Erik Dammann / The Future in Our Hands (Norway)

**Honorary Award (1982)**



*"...for challenging Western values and lifestyles in order to promote a more responsible attitude to the environment and the third world."*

Erik Dammann

Erik Dammann was born in Norway in 1931 and began his professional life in design, advertising and public relations. Becoming disillusioned with the consumerism his work required him to promote, he went with his family to live for a year in Polynesia, where they shared the life and lifestyle of the villagers in a culture founded on cooperation and sharing.

He returned to Norway with the realisation that the West's focus on competition for personal gain had more to do with social structure than human nature. He also came back with a deep respect for other cultures and with a sense of responsibility for the way they were being destroyed by the consumption-oriented Western lifestyle and world view. He perceived an immense gap between the stated values of Western society, such as justice, freedom, responsibility and solidarity, and the actual impact of that society on people in other countries and on the Earth.

Working on these issues following his return to Norway, Dammann published in 1979 *The Future in Our Hands* (English edition, Pergamon Press), a book which struck a very responsive chord with people in Norway and elsewhere. In 1974 Dammann devoted himself full-time to establish a Future in Our Hands Movement, which grew during the 1970s to have over 25,000 members and a considerable political influence.

The centre of the Movement's activities is an information office in Oslo, which publishes a monthly magazine, *Folkevett* (Common Sense) and promotes political, personal and social change towards a more just and conserving society. This is described in another of Dammann's books, *Revolution in the Affluent Society* (English edition, Heretic Books).

The Movement has individual, local groups around Norway, an institute that publishes regular reports on alternative political solutions according to the mMovement's ideas, and a Development Fund with an annual budget of US\$3 million that has funded projects in more than 20 countries. In Swindon, England, The Future in Our Hands-UK operates a coordination centre for the 12 sisters movements that have developed both in industrial and developing countries.

In 1982, *The Future in Our Hands*, supported by other Nordic NGOs, was the prime mover of the Nordic Alternative Futures Project, which was originally initiated by Erik Dammann. The project, which is still active, has since received funding from the Norwegian government to research an 'alternative future' which would put social, global and environmental values above economic considerations.

During the later years Erik Dammann has initiated several projects. Among them are:

In 1999, the Forum For Systems Debate, an organisation that arranged regular meetings on alternatives to today's economic system.

In 2009 Dammann initiated an international conference, "Crises and Possibility" in Oslo, in cooperation with the Norwegian Department of the Environment, *The Future In Our Hands* and Concerned Scientists Norway. The aim of the conference was to put focus on the conflict between today's economic world order and the need for a change in economic and social development for the sake of global justice and the environment; and to convince the Norwegian Government that Norway, as an oil nation, has a special obligation to arrange a series of international conferences for leaders of politics, natural science and economics around the world on this theme.

Dammann now continues his work as an independent author and adviser. His books, sixteen in all, have been translated into seven languages. The most mentioned beside *The Future In Our Hands* are *The Day is Yours* about philosophy of life, *Beyond Time and Space* (Norwegian 1987, German 1990), *About a New Way of Looking at Religion and Man's Free Will In The Light Of Modern Science*, and *Money or Life*. In 2005 his autobiography, *Kontraster (Contrasts)*, was published.

#### Quotation

*"In the same way that we today think that the slave trade and colonial exploitation were inhuman and inconceivably bestial ways of acquiring riches, there is no doubt that coming generations will think that our form of world trade and distribution of the world's benefits were just as inconceivable and inhuman."*

Erik Dammann

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