

Review of **The Spirit of Camphill. Birth of a Movement** – April 2019

In “The Spirit of Camphill - Birth of a Movement,” editor Richard Steel skillfully weaves archival material from the Karl Konig Institute using his expert first-hand experience in Camphill. The political, social and cultural conditions in 20th Century Middle Europe illuminate the conditions which drove a youth group, studying Rudolf Steiner, from Vienna to Britain and resulted in the formation of a new community called Camphill, caring for children with special needs. The book presents a valuable collection of Karl Koenig’s papers and other contemporary publications during the development of the Camphill Movement, including: *Pioneers in an Old Manse* (1941), *The Candle on the Hill* (1961), *the Three Stars* (1959), *The Three Pillars* (1961), *The Three Essentials of Camphill* (1965), *the Birth of a Movement* (1965), *Modern Community Building* (1966), and an *Address to the Tutzinger Stern* (1963). The book benefits from the inclusion of Anke Weihs’ “Fragments from the Story of Camphill 1939 – 1940” (1975) and several other selections in the appendix. The reader will take note that this is not simply a book about Karl Konig, in fact, the most memorable sentence to this reader is attributed to Anke Weihs’ response in 1980, during a youth conference at the end of a long meeting, when she is asked “But what is Camphill?” and responds calmly that “Camphill is to will the future.”

While reading “The Spirit of Camphill - Birth of a Movement,” the reader finds that the editor has taken on this task “to will the future” the fruits of which deserves a special place on the desk of every Camphill’er. In his introduction to the work, the editor writes that he is “on an expedition for roots, the inner motifs and the historical setting of the birth process” that point not only to the conception and birth of Camphill, but also the spirit of something becoming, like rediscovering the wishes of a father for his child’s future and development. Reading this book is the rare opportunity to experience Camphill and the Camphill Movement from outside one’s own beliefs, values, and experiences; seeing the child through the loving parent’s eyes. The editor identifies three moments crucial to the formation of Camphill: Karl Konig’s recognition of the descending spirit being while working with Ita Wegman, the youth group’s vow in 1938 to form an intentional community, and the quest for a new form of Christianity, which appears in anthroposophy.

Importantly, Richard Steel distinguishes between how Karl Konig defined the roles of the inner and outer founding of Camphill in the Introduction. He quotes Dr. Konig as written in 1948, “The Community is given a special task, the fulfillment of which requires much tact and insight, for the institutions must be there for all people, but not the Community. The Community must maintain a wakeful eye for the institutions it brings about and it must serve those people who wish to live in its atmosphere.” The reader may find cause to consider this the most proactive claim of this book. Does the Community still serve the people who wish to live in Camphill today? Which institutions and traditions are created by the Community, and do they help the people who want to live in Camphill today? Pick up your copy today to join the debate!

Jon Flint, Soquel, California

