

# ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

March 20, 1983  
Unitarian Church, Canton  
Bill Sutkus at Chair

- I. Motion made and seconded to turn NFC over to Green Growers and all non-Green Growers' people resign NFC. Vote was unanimously in favor.
- II. B. Sutkus then called for ideas concerning organization of a new group to support homesteading and whether people want to organize as a group.
- T. Plastino asked for a new name before possible (later) incorporation in order to open a checking account.
  - V. Summer said she didn't want to incorporate and to keep it simple, with a steering committee but no board or officers.
  - For tax purposes (benefit to givers in receiving tax-free gifts), the point was made that incorporation could be useful. Other than that, no reasons were noted for incorporation now. Educational and tax reasons were noted as possible reasons to incorporate later. Simplicity was stressed.
- III. Vote was taken to organize, but not incorporate. All were in favor.
- IV. B. Sutkus called for a statement of purpose and noted that "supporting homesteading raised two questions: What comprises support, and How do we define homesteading?"

As support: moral, educational (share experiences) and physical (materials) were suggested. Besides homesteading, N. Grudens noted that community support was important, too.

- B. Sutkus asked, "What are we?" Bob Keesey said that it with an ecological perspective, not just to try to make a living on a farm.
- Other questions were: many people work out (not full-time); politics at issue, ecology a preoccupation, i.e. "homesteading" may be too specific a title.
- Keesey suggested three basic roles:
  - a) to include education of experiences, problems and solutions
  - b) to get together as a social/community group
  - c) organizing as political, ecological, or educational, i.e., an expansive role
- Idea of "better tomorrows" being a common goal seemed general.
- V. Summer noted that the group had a lot of diversity, so, to avoid divisions, issues & dilemmas (political, etc) should be handled one at a time, instead of inappropriately deciding that we will or won't always be, for example, political or an outreach group, etc.
- Idea evolved that questions like "what is homesteading?", "why are we together?", and "where do we stand on various issues?" are ongoing thought processes and that what is important now is only to organize loosely and make a name.

(The question of recruitment came up here, related to the new name. Mode of recruitment and public image were noted as important. People decided not to procrastinate, however, and make a name now that could eventually be changed.)



- V. Name: T. Bouchard wrote suggestions on the board. A lively debate got under way.
- a. Community of North Country Homesteaders (CONCH)
  - b. Association of North Country Homesteaders (ANKH)
  - c. Homesteaders and Small Farmers
  - d. The Greens
  - e. Rural Life Society/or Cooperative
  - f. St. Lawrence Organic Workers (SLOW)
  - g. Ecological Smallholders
  - h. Landworkers
  - i. Rural Resources
  - j. Rural Life Community Enrichment Project, or Association
  - k. Rural Life Movement

No new ideas were taken after these. Decision was made to vote by majority, with multiple voting possible. j, e, g, and h were the four highest candidates. Eventually, "Rural Life Association" was elected. People decided to keep the name open to later changes after an almost unanimous "yes" vote to the question, "Can you live with it, at least until the next meeting?" (33 yes, 7 no)

- VI. V. Summer then made a statement concerning women's roles in NFC & RLA. She started by noting the generally male-dominated conversations in meetings. She praised the group for what equality it did have. The point was raised that perhaps the women in the group just didn't like speaking out in groups. Val asked if other women had noticed problems and/or were interested and called for a one-time women's meeting to discuss issues. Lots of revealing discussion followed, both for and against the proposed meeting and generally regarding sex roles in the procedures of this group. Finally, most agreed that it was a good idea, and Val asked for sign-ups for meeting.
- VII. Dues. Jane Plastino motioned to keep dues the same. Consensus immediately reached.
- VIII. To abolish disliked procedural necessities, B. Sutkus asked group for ideas concerning changing the board of directors to a steering committee. Val Summer suggested that "anyone whocomes is in the committee" and suggested special-interest small committees. People decided that the group was too small for that. One steering committee was agreed upon.
- V. Ingram noted that the schedule of meetings is in the newsletter and anyone could come. She also said that no non-board members ever came to board meetings in the past because people think, "Oh, they'll do it." She thereby praised the idea that personal interest and initiative would take the place of organized responsibility.
  - T. Plastino pointed out that an appointed group assures that things get done. He was afraid that responsibility and sense of duty would get lost in nebulous structure of duties.
  - Ginger Storey said that appointment of a facilitator for the next meeting at the present meeting, who would create the agenda for the next meeting, would be wise. She also suggested that whoever showed up for the steering committee meeting would become the committee.
  - The point was raised that the cost of mailing agendas to everyone was too expensive and the telephone tree not practical.

So: Volunteers were taken at the meeting to be the next steering committee (i.e., to attend the next steering committee meeting and make decisions). All others showing up would be welcome. Thus, responsibility was made concrete. Volunteers would be mailed agendas. Agreed that the steering committee would always be open to all members.



