Icons, emblems, images, pictures

Food for thought

WN symbols. The New Nutrition, The Food System (the two images), Big Food Watch, Sugar, Climate, Farming, Development, Source, Blog Watch, Hot Stuff, Balance. All are food for thought.

‘Sometimes the pictures seem to be more important than the text’, it is occasionally said of WN. True. Words – and charts, graphs, tables and the like – are usually the right way to convey facts. Pictures – including symbols, graphics, images – are often the right way to convey ideas. The comment on WN is, I feel, really saying that serious journals should be mainly concerned with evidence and information and should stay away from opinion and attitude.

Some of the symbols shown above, now used by WN to project many of the areas of our contributions, almost as brand images, do no more than illustrate a concept. The most powerful and successful pictures project a point of view. A striking example is the icon we use for our coverage of Sugar, which conveys allure. Another example is the image for Farming, which projects the need for hands-on nurture. This issue of WN introduces Balance, whose image, including the sun and moon, yin and yang, evokes health and well-being as mental, emotional and spiritual as well as physical.

Coming on strong

The cover of this issue of WN on climate, of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, is faithful to the views of this month’s chief contributor Tony McMichael. But it is disturbing. It evokes the real possibility that change in global climate could cause collapse of civilisation. Words alone do not adequately convey this dreadful threat, whereas WN’s constant use of the icon of the vortex created by vast storms as the emblem for Climate, may make readers feel that what has been created by humans may well right now be passing outside human control.

In these matters timing and phrasing are vital. A cover on climate using an image from the Revelation of St John the Divine would if published 20 years ago have been widely seen as gratuitously alarmist. Some readers now may feel that it goes too far. Well, in that case, the WN Feedback section will welcome well-reasoned letters from independent sources, explaining why we should not be too alarmed.
Cannon G. Icons, emblems, images, pictures. Food for thought
What do you think? [Column]. World Nutrition October 2014, 5, 10, 894-896

Graphic images made for the climate marches, and photographs: Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea; Leonardo diCaprio with native Americans in New York City; New Delhi; Trinidad and Tobago

Climate made manifest

In this issue, WN publishes lots of pictures of the climate marches and demonstrations all over the world. Here are more. They tell a story that words by themselves could not. The point of demonstrations is to be there and to be seen and recorded. The style of what is shown is crucial – the method is the message. What can be seen above is that the marches and demonstrations were superbly organised and co-ordinated. The graphic designs are top professional quality. The one of Barack Obama, recognised by his ears, as a spectator of industrial pollution, is clever.

Also, the manifestations were stylish, attractive and confident. The events were not portrayed as rabble being roused. One reason is that UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon made sure that he was seen with the marchers in New York. Remarkably, the images in newspapers and on television took their cue from the organisers, including the awesome on-line and social media Avaaz movement. Supported by words repeating that the greatest impact of climate change will be and is on food systems and world health, these pictures tell all concerned with public health and nutrition that climate is a political issue that affects their work and lives, every day.
Four pictures from this issue of WN. A classic Christmas Coke ad. Ban Ki-moon on the march. Tuscan children joining in the baking of wholewheat bread. ‘Food’ for asylum seekers in Ireland

Here are four more pictures, now from this issue of WN. Above left is a ‘classic’ Christmas Coke ad that would not be used now, showing where Coke executives’ heads have been at. Next is Ban Ki-moon on the New York City climate march, accepting a petition. Below left are schoolchildren in Quarrata, Tuscany, being taught how to make wholegrain bread served with their lunches. Below right illustrates the type of ‘meals’ that refugees from Europe, Africa and elsewhere with intact food cultures, are forced to eat in prison-style asylum centres in Ireland.

Could the point of these stories by fully made only with words? No, I think not. To protect public health it is necessary to speak and show as well as to write.

Status

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