**HOW FARMING CHANGED THE WORLD**

This is the story of a revolution. No records were kept, so there is still much we do not know about it. Even so, it Is the greatest revolution in history. Were it not for the Neolithic Revolution, society as we know it today would be vastly different.

Hunter-gatherer Life

For most of our time on Earth, we humans lived as hunter-gatherers. Every day, groups of people would trap and kill wild animals, while others collected and prepared wild plants, nuts, and berries. If they were lucky and there was plenty of food, they were able to provide enough food for themselves and their children. If they were unlucky, they starved and died.

In order to stay close to their food sources, hunter-gatherers needed to be mobile. They set up temporary camps, lived there for a while, and moved on when the food supply began to run out. In order to move around quickly and easily, tribal units were small – 20 or 30 people, all of whom worked hard to keep themselves and their children alive.

Because of weather, animal migrations, and the long seasons, starvation was always just one step away. People had little time to do anything other than find food, warmth, and shelter for themselves and their families.

**The Dawn of the Neolithic Age**

Fourteen thousand years ago, a new lifestyle began to emerge. An Ice Age was coming to an end and temperatures were warming very quickly. Food became available and easier to find for the first time in thousands of years. Instead of having to travel long distances to find food, some groups were able to live in the same place all year round. People started to build permanent housing.

By 10,000 BC, they were discovering that certain animals, such as goats, sheep, cattle and pigs were easy to manage and be held captive close to their homes. They selected and grew certain grasses, such as oats, wheat and barley, which provided nourishment to larger groups of people. These plants became common anywhere there was human settlement. They discovered how to store and preserve food over the harsh winter months. Farming began and a new age, the Neolithic Age began.

**The Effects of the Neolithic Revolution**

The move from a hunter-gatherer to a farmer did not take place overnight. In the beginning, it was not as good as hunting and-gathering, since settled people were easier targets for attack, their nutrition suffered due to lack of a balanced diet, and they were more likely to suffer diseases. Over time it became the dominant method to get food and several changes that happened because of this:

1. Population Growth

When people lived in permanent settlements, it became possible for women to have children much more frequently. As the techniques of plant growing and raising animals got better, it was possible to feed entire groups of people from small numbers of food-sources.

People in farming communities were less worried about changes in nature than hunter gatherers. A population explosion occurred, and over time villages, then towns, and eventually cities, took shape.

2. Specialization

Another effect of the food surplus was that not everybody needed to be involved in finding and preparing food. People now had more time to do other things. People could do other things. New professions were born such as tool-making, pottery, weaving, and carpentry.

3. Trade

With the development of farming, trade between villages occurred. To exchange of goods people became merchants.

4. Security

All this wealth had a bad side. There were people around who greatly wanted it, and would stop at nothing to take it from others. New security measures were required to keep unwanted people away. Walls were built. Another group of specialists, soldiers, emerged, to defend the property. Rules had to be made, leading much later to the legal system as we know it today.

5. Government

Large increases in population created demands on housing and food supply; arguments happened regularly due to families living so closely to each other; crime and threats from both within and without, made strong leadership necessary to the survival of a community.

6. Disease

The new lifestyle brought with it a new threat. For the first time in history, large groups of humans, animals, waste material, and rubbish were concentrated together in the same households. This led to select organisms able to jump species, infecting the human population in large numbers for the very first time. Examples included smallpox, tuberculosis and measles, influenza and malaria. It was around this time also that the rat attached itself to human societies and has prospered ever since.

**QUESTIONS**

**1. How did Hunter-Gatherers get their food?**

**2. Why was it necessary for them to be “mobile?”**

**3. How big were Hunter-Gatherer societies?**

**4. Discuss how these things changed when man became a farmer. Make sure you talk about WHY these changes happened:**

**Where he was able to live:**

**How many children women could have:**

**The size of their group:**

**The overall population of people on the planet:**

**The need for government (laws):**

**Leisure time (non-working time):**

**5. What were some “bad” things that happened as a result of man becoming a farmer?**