

LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD

Mackinac Island sparkled at its most picturesque. A gathering of more than 100 people at Mission Point, once the home of a large international center for MRA, was a unique blending of old and new.

The event – the opening of a public exhibit describing MRA's history on the island – was inspired by Erik and Lana Petersen and Vern and Meryl Eriksson. Bill Cameron-Johnson, with the help of a creative team spanning the Atlantic, had put together the exhibit at the request of the current owner. The exhibit gives a fascinating window on the past and carries us into the future. Central to it are three murals by Erling Roberts featuring 121 portraits of people influenced by Frank Buchman. Erling's son, Malcolm, and 19 year-old granddaughter, Alexis, took part in the opening.

The mayor of Mackinac Island, Margaret Doud, joined the group for a dinner with the owner. Some of those present had been at Mackinac in 1942 when MRA arrived on the island at Mrs Henry Ford's suggestion and rented Island House from the State for \$1 a year! Others described the sweat that went into building the center. There were stories of those who had come from many lands and the teams and plays that went out to the world. Fresh initiatives were described that are part of the streams that continue to flow.

In this special setting where the Great Lakes mingle, the US MRA Board and the Canadian MRA Council met together. Reminded of the strong partnership over the years in Mackinac, a spirit of teamwork for the future was rekindled. Several went from Mackinac to a national consultation in Richmond, Virginia, aimed at clarifying MRA's national priorities. The common links between those involved in various MRA initiatives were strengthened. Working groups were created around several ideas aimed at deepening our learning, replenishing spiritual reserves and enlisting the next generation. In the coming weeks these groups will refine the proposals and outline timelines and budgets. The vision of a national team that is diverse, dynamic, imaginative, skilled and energetic is becoming a reality.

Rob & Susan Corcoran

'EXCELLENT AND DIFFERENT' SAYS TEACHER

The British MRA Schools Service now has two teams in operation. Last week one was in Cornwall for a programme arranged by Joan Dolphin, while the other was in Newcastle hosted by David Down. Currently

the teams comprise young people from Ukraine, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

At one school we asked students what they would like to clean from their slates. Half the students wrote that they wanted to mend relationships with parents and a third wrote that they wanted to give up smoking. One teacher, giving a vote of thanks, said: 'I often fear saying what is on my mind, but the presentation has challenged me to speak up.' Another teacher said: 'That was excellent. I expected it to be different, but not that different.'

Oleshya Bishko from Ukraine said, 'At first I found it very challenging to stand in front of 120 students, but now I find deep satisfaction when one of them says to me, "Thank you, you made me think about my life."' Gilbert Motlhaping said, 'I came to find out about this programme, so that we can incorporate some elements into our schools programme in South Africa. With every presentation I've found the "real me standing tall and proud", to be in a position to influence brothers and sisters here in the UK.'

Howard Grace

'AN IMAGINATIVE MILLENNIUM IDEA'

A 'Clean Slate Week' will be held in Oxford, November 29 – December 5. The idea was launched early this month by the Lord Mayor at a reception in her parlour attended by local leaders including the Chairman of the County Council and a local Member of Parliament, both of whom spoke, and the Bishop of Oxford.

Describing the Clean Slate Campaign as 'an imaginative millennium idea', the Lord Mayor welcomed this 'chance to reflect and think where we, the community and the world are going. Clean Slate gives us a chance to do this. It is a simple idea, which won't cost money, and is something we can all do. We can all choose what we do – we can patch up a row with a neighbour or a friend, or accept an olive branch offered by someone else – or return that book you have had for five years.'

Local radio carried several reports the next day, and further meetings are being arranged to plan for events to be held in the special week.

Last week Australia's Radio National carried a 20-minute interview with me about the Clean Slate campaign. The interviewer had read about the campaign on an American web site.

Edward Peters

LEBANESE DELEGATION VISITS BRITAIN

Last month the British-Arab University Association welcomed a Lebanese delegation to the UK. The six graduates visited London, Edinburgh and the West of Scotland, meeting members of the House of Commons and the Scottish Parliament, and others active in the multicultural life of Britain. Finally the delegation spoke to the Foundations for Freedom 'Time of Discovery', which had brought 15 people from Central and Eastern Europe and Southern Africa to Tirley Garth, the MRA centre in Northern England. Through spending a fortnight together, the participants had the chance to know and begin to trust those from different backgrounds in their own country. Elvir Abu Saleh, from Zahle, commented: 'I believe God sent me here to give me a message. Maybe it is to go back home and work with the group for a new Lebanon.'

Ronnie Graham

REUNION FOR COURSE PARTICIPANTS

In the past three years at Armagh, the MRA centre in Melbourne, six nine-day courses have been held for young adults 'to shape a path and a purpose for living'. This month 25 former participants came together for a weekend reunion. 'The course changed my life,' said Tracy Driscoll. 'There were deep conflicts in my family and I learnt skills around resolving them. Having never believed I could do anything, I am now at university studying nursing.' David Lih had gone to his library after the course, and offered to pay for books he had damaged. Originally from East Timor, he told of his decision 'not to judge a race by the actions of a few'. Recently, when hatred boiled up inside him, he went to his Indonesian friends and told them. 'They were understanding, and the friendships have strengthened.' From the Philippines came Jennifer Padua, who went from the course to become the speech writer for her country's First Lady. The reunion had given her new vision for her work she said.

MRA BOARDS REPRESENTED AT CAUX

Twenty MRA Boards (out of 35 acting legal bodies world-wide) were represented at a meeting in Caux in August. This was the third year that MRA Boards have met. The meeting discussed the 'Guidelines for new MRA legal bodies', encouraged Boards to give, if possible, 1% of their budget towards the expenses of the International Council, and considered further the idea of an International MRA Association. A report is available from Philippe Lassere (MRA France, e-mail: PHLassere@compuserve.com).

CHOGM EXHIBITION STAND

This year's Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting takes place in Durban, South Africa. An exhibition by Non Governmental Organisations will be held at the adjacent Commonwealth People's Centre, 10-15 November.

May we invite your country's delegates to visit the MRA stand, No C1, which will have an attractive display, free literature and an interesting team. We will be glad to meet and entertain visitors, and a seafront apartment has been put at our disposal. Please let us know about people from your country and give them our contact numbers:

Phone (7-16 Nov. only): +27 31 337 2744
Fax (preferably before 7 Nov.) +27 12 344 4425 or
e-mail (throughout) edwardh@mra.org.uk.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

*Agnes Hofmeyr, Edward Howard, Bukwiwe Maseko,
Campbell Leggat and team.*

THREE RESPONSES TO SURESH

Three readers have responded to Suresh's views in the September WB. We would welcome all views which can help the Panchgani Consultation as it focuses on these crucial issues. – the Editors

Suresh Khatri's personal views (Sept WB) gave a stimulating frame of thought for February's Global Consultation in Panchgani on 'A fresh look at the world and MRA's priorities from a non-western perspective'.

In taking the rich world/poor world discussion further, it would be helpful to look separately at (1) rich world attitudes, and (2) the attitudes within MRA.

On the first point, Suresh's views were echoed powerfully at Caux, not least by the Africans. In conflicts where the rich world's interests are involved (e.g. oil in Iraq or European stability in Kosovo), the West intervenes massively. Where the West is less directly involved, its efforts are half-hearted, even when the cost in lives and suffering is great (Rwanda, Angola, Eritrea/Ethiopia). In many cases the rich world's arms peddlers throw oil on the fire.

Attitudes to the poverty of about 50 percent of the earth's population are equally revealing: it has taken years of massive campaigning to make rich world governments move on debt alleviation, and even now many governments are keener to identify obstacles than opportunities. How could they do otherwise with the rich world's citizens clamouring and voting for ever more benefits and luxuries? This tidal wave of consumption is a response to people's emptiness in rich but secularized societies; but that is no consolation for the poor.

When it comes to the attitudes and priorities of MRA teams in the rich world, it seems to me, the picture is less clear. A high percentage of our teams have spent years in poor countries, and most have an engagement of the heart to build a just world. For veterans like myself, however, the capacity for travel is diminishing, while younger folk often have their freedom of movement limited by young families. For both categories, responsibility for MRA work and properties in their own countries and manpower problems make them less available internationally. Nor must we forget that the closed world of Communist nations opening up has added inspiring

but also very demanding opportunities.

This being said, Suresh's question as to whether our teams in the rich world have sufficient 'mental space' left for urgent needs elsewhere is relevant. Are we to some extent held captive by the thinking and paradigms of the rich world surrounding us? Are our efforts to stem the tide of materialism and moral anarchy in our own societies keeping us from trying to help those whose needs are even more acute? Might losing ourselves in a task outside our own continents be the rich world's best chance to break out of its narcissism? It is in losing your life that you shall find it, said Jesus.

I agree with Suresh that full-hour quiet times and enough time together to pray, discuss and search can lead us to answers. Only the flame of truth and faith burning brightly in each of us and in our life together will enable us to see reality beyond our preconceptions and cultural conditioning. The Panchgani Consultation will try to see the world from the perspective of the poor. I hope we will have the best possible representation from our continents.

Jens J Wilhelmsen

Like many others – or so I hope – I have been titillated by Suresh Khatri's personal view. I felt first a bit irritated and wondered whether I had been at the same conference this year as Suresh. During the ten days I spent at Caux (the Agenda for Reconciliation session), non-Western voices had a large part in the plenaries and nobody who was there will ever forget the masterly way a young Kenyan woman led the meeting on corruption. When I attend a conference in Asia, I find it normal to have the preoccupations of that part of the world central. Back in Geneva, I read in our two daily papers a series of substantial articles on Angola. So beware of generalisations.

Yet Suresh's main preoccupations and questions are indeed fully valid. It would be too simple to say that MRA was born out of the conviction of an American, and made its way through Anglo-Saxon countries first, with its world centre of Caux located in Switzerland, indeed one of the richest countries in the world. That is an 'historic' explanation of it all. But it doesn't solve the problem raised by Suresh. As one who has been much involved in the past in writing and producing invitations for the Caux assemblies, and in trying to report what was taking place at them, I have been more than once in despair that I, a French-speaking Swiss, was faced with the fact that a good text in English does not necessarily convey in French what it meant for English speakers. And vice versa. So I know from experience that in these moments it is so easy to have a 'minority complex' which leads one to resent what can be felt as domination or control by a particular group. This summer I guess that 95% of those who spoke at meetings did so in English, though it was taking place in a French-speaking region. I don't like it. But I know that English is for the time being *the lingua franca* of our age.

Fortunately for me, in my inner life, my dialogue with God is conducted in French (probably so as to make sure that I don't miss anything of it!). And, as Suresh

points out so rightly in his own conclusions, the key factor for any man or woman rests in this vital moment when God speaks to our hearts. This is what can make the difference for a Swiss or a Fijian, for somebody from Angola or Kosovo or anywhere else. The Dalai Lama is a remarkable example for those who have reasons to feel sometimes excluded. Here is a man who could have been revered all his life in his closed country and few would have heard of him. Bitter events forced him out of his cultural and religious background. Yet, because of the strength of his character and his inner peace, he had become a world figure. His English is certainly not his strong point – but the light in his heart is.

Well, these are a few remarks, which may be a modest contribution to those who will ponder in Panchgani the issues raised by Suresh.

Daniel Mottu

Suresh Khatri's incendiary message lobbed into the September WB should spark debate and fresh thinking. Whether or not we agree with his analysis, we need to be fired with new vision and passion.

His challenge is to live as a truly global fellowship, demonstrating active justice, love and respect towards those whom the world marginalises, and becoming a symbol of co-responsibility for the UN and the world.

'Better-off' MRA teams need to listen to those struggling. We sometimes fear being so overwhelmed with their needs that we end up doing nothing. But those in the developing world often surprise us with their energy, vision and application of MRA's message. The scale of the *Clean Election* campaigns catches our breath. *Gente que Avanza*, the young people from Latin America, gave many of us at Caux a burst of youthful energy, sweeping aside our safe mid-life conservatism.

Might the next phase of MRA's vision and calling emerge from these 'front-line' countries? Could the Panchgani Consultation make it specific?

For instance, is there some pan-African movement that world MRA could get behind? Could two streams of Latin America evident at Caux – the youth and the grassroots favela people – combine in a program for social justice? Might there be a bold initiative to address the critical needs and opportunities in Russia and East Europe, akin to the 'World Mission' of the '50s? Will we give adequate support to Action 2000, the most significant attempt to enlist and train a generation responsible for MRA?

To go beyond token support, any such visions would need broad consensus within our different regions before the Consultation.

Mike Brown

UPDATE ON HAGUENAU MEETING:

This year the cost of stay is: 1150 FRF for a twin bedroom, or 1350 FRF for a single room for the whole stay. Please send your application by OCTOBER 31. Thank you.

The hosting committee

REPORT OF AFR SESSION AVAILABLE

An eight-page report, rich in photographs, of the highlights of the *Agenda for Reconciliation* session at Caux in August will be available shortly.

Orders of 50 or more (available from John Bond at the address below) will cost £0.33 or US\$0.60 per copy plus air freight or postage charges which we estimate will average £0.25 or US\$0.45 per copy.

For smaller orders please contact MRA Centres or AfR representatives.

ACTION REQUIRED NOW

If you wish to suggest a change or correction in the MRA world address list, immediate action is required.

Please send changes to Lotty@compuserve.com or to Lotty Wolvekamp, Amaliastraat 10, 2514 JC The Hague, Holland.

NEW DIRECTORY IS NOW AVAILABLE

The new 'World Directory of MRA courses 1999-2000' booklet is finally ready for distribution. I am aware that many of you have never seen this booklet which includes details of all MRA courses and youth

focused initiatives around the world. It's a very useful document to hand out to young people who are interested in taking part in a course or initiative in their own region or another part of the world. I have a supply of these A5 booklets and am happy to send you copies at your request: 73 Victoria Road, Oxford, OX2 7QG, UK (Fax: +44 1865 311 950) or chkarrer@compuserve.com.

Christine Karrer

CORRECTION

Last month we mistakenly attributed LEARNING TRUST IN LVIV to Laura Trevelyan. In fact it was written by her sister, Gail. Sorry Gail!

the Editors

FACTS ON FAXES, PHONES AND ADDRESSES

Japan: These two e-mail addresses have changed slightly: Kiyoshi Nagano: LEB03055@nifty.ne.jp
Yukinori Kashiwabara: KYU05006@nifty.ne.jp

Holland: Johannes and Hennie de Pous have new e-mail addresses:

Johannes: johannes@moreleherbewapening.nl
Hennie: hennie@moreleherbewapening.nl

Calendar of Events

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|-----------|----------------------------|--|-----|-----------|
| OCT '99 | <u>Salvador Brazil</u> | Meeting of the Americas | Oct | 1 - 6 |
| NOV '99 | <u>Rzeszów Poland</u> | Second International East-West conference on business ethics | Nov | 4 - 6 |
| NOV '99 | <u>Malta</u> | Dialogue for Mediterranean region | Nov | 5 - 10 |
| NOV '99 | <u>Schengen Luxembourg</u> | One-day seminar 'Où allons-nous en Europe?' – organised by families and local leadership of the east of France | Nov | 6 |
| NOV '99 | <u>Haquenau France</u> | Caux 2000 planning meeting | Nov | 10 - 15 |
| DEC '99 | <u>Sydney Australia</u> | A conference to mark the new century | Dec | 3 - 7 |
| FEB '2000 | <u>Asia Plateau India</u> | MRA Global Consultation | Feb | 4 - 11 |
| FEB '2000 | <u>Melbourne Australia</u> | Effective Living Course | Feb | 6 - Apr 8 |

The deadline for the next Bulletin is Monday, 15 November 1999

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