



The Australian Information Service, London

Melbourne across the Yarra River

# NEW WORLD NEWS

Vol30 No6 13 Feb 1982 18p



## MELBOURNE DIALOGUE OF COMMON SENSE

HOW DO YOU CREATE meaningful dialogue between 236 people who superficially have little in common? Some hold university doctorates. Others are jargon-speaking teenagers. An executive delegated by IBM to talk about micro-chip technology sits down with a shipyard worker who is worried about a demarcation dispute which is preventing him from getting tools. A pig-farmer and parliamentarians set out to exchange spiritual truths.

Communication was not automatic. Yet the delegates from 15 countries who gathered last month in Melbourne, Australia, for a five-day 'dialogue of common sense' gained something of both dialogue and common sense.

Four working groups met every day to consider the rich-poor gap, the multi-racial society, family life and education, and industry. Each day one of the groups took their dialogue into a plenary session involving all the delegates, where a teacher could question management values, a housewife ask about foreign aid and an economist supply the relevant statistics.

### Groundswell

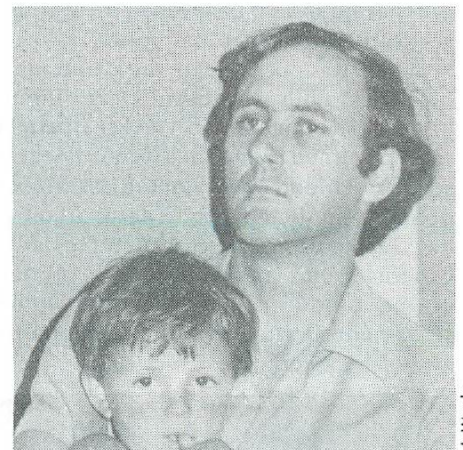
Underlying all the discussion was a realisation that common sense, in terms of merely defining reasonable solutions, was not enough. A series of studies looked for the 'uncommon qualities' needed to transform common sense into reality—objectivity, sensitivity based on repentance, the extension of intelligence which comes with real wisdom, the care without which common sense is just good advice.

The dialogue ended with a statement in which participants undertook to 'create a groundswell for a new brand of politics... (with) a commitment to care for the other man'. It called for the 'sort of care in each of us which will find answers to such human issues as unemployment, the dispossession of the Aboriginal, the growing disregard for the rights of the child'. This would require hard personal decisions of all.

A number of politicians from the three major parties took part. Doug Everingham, a Federal Labour MP and former Minister of Health, said that politicians must 'put their principles on the line whatever the cost' if they wanted to be 'real leaders in changing the world'. He attended the whole dialogue and commented, 'We have found remarkable examples of new attitudes and lasting changes when one man, woman or child determines to follow disinterested and enlightened conscience.'

Brief summaries and speeches from each working group follow. ■

CONTENTS	PAGE
Melbourne dialogue	1-6
Prayer	6-7
Poland	8



A Weeks

Family and education...page 4



page 8

'A great wrong will not be righted without a great struggle. Perseverance is the key. It will take commitment and compassion from us all.'

## Rich and Poor

DISCUSSIONS on how to answer world poverty often concentrate on complex, technical issues, leaving the concerned lay-person feeling helpless. The working group on narrowing the gap between rich and poor focused on what the individual could do.

Malnutrition kills or disables millions of children every year. Stanley Barnes, author of *200 Million Hungry Children*, called for people to face such facts squarely and to work for the political will 'to see things done that ought to be done'. 'We have the necessary technology to solve the problems,' he said.

'We must have the compassion that means we really care,' Mr Barnes went on. Those who wanted to see a new economic order must be willing to accept whatever changes in their personal lifestyles this might demand.

Lindy Drew from Queensland took his point. 'I want to make my life available to God minute by minute so that if He has a part for me in this I can be used,' she said.

Australia now gives 0.5 per cent of her Gross National Product in aid to Third World countries. The government has agreed in principle to raise this to 0.7 per cent, but claims that Australia cannot afford it at present. 'Politicians cannot move far ahead of public opinion,' said Federal MP Peter Falconer. Voters who wanted an increase in aid must tell their MPs. John Mills, a retired industrial chemist, pointed out that aid should be given in the way that most helped the recipient, rather than the donor.

But aid was not enough, the group agreed. 'We should be prepared to buy what developing nations have to offer and to pay a fair price,' Alan Weeks, a participant who had recently returned from Papua New Guinea, emphasised. He described a friend who worked for a cocoa marketing co-operative in the country's North Solomon Province. Every day a cable from London stated the day's cocoa price. This was totally unrelated to the cost of production or the needs of the producer. 'Which of us would accept a wage settlement dictated daily by someone thousands of miles away?' he asked. ■



Neil Brown (right), Federal Minister for Youth Affairs, talks to J R Coulter, one of the Dialogue's organisers.

**Graeme Cordiner**, one of 150 Australian teachers taking part in a government-initiated scheme in Zimbabwe

LAST FEBRUARY there was fighting in Bulawayo where I am posted. Some 500 people were killed. I was in a safe area. When I was honest, I knew I did not really care about what was going on in the other part of the city. I asked myself, 'Why am I lacking in compassion even for people so nearby?'

I decided to get to know the people of Zimbabwe. Now some of my closest friends are former guerillas, some of them disabled. They have begun to find a way beyond hatred and together we are seeking what we can do for the country.

This is another aspect of aid. I have learnt the relevance of high moral standards, having experienced the effects of low moral standards in my own country. Because of this, and because God is a factor in my life, I had something to build on when I went to Zimbabwe.

I have learnt that when I get involved with people I develop. As I suffer with them something of compassion is born in me. Compassion costs something, but unless we find it we risk the same fate as Uganda and Kampuchea.

In Zimbabwe we Australians have technical skills. But that is not sufficient. We need to learn how to serve. Maybe the most important thing we as whites can offer is humility.

Our biggest enemy is self-righteousness. I have learnt that I am capable of every act. The Christian who goes to church on Sunday and forgets about it the rest of the week; the idealistic Marxist who is morally defeated; the man who exploits; the exploited man who is full of hate and self-pity—all these men can be me. Zimbabweans are interested when I tell them how I apologised to some Aboriginal people in a small town in Queensland for the way we have treated their people. ■

### Kevichalie North East India

WE NAGAS are a tribal people. Like other tribals in the world we are poor materially. My father earns about Rs 400 (A\$40 or £15) per month to keep our family. Often I felt bad because I couldn't have what others had.

When I came to Australia just before the Dialogue I observed the beautiful buildings, cars and television. I also learned that neighbours do not usually talk to each other and people do not have enough time for one another.

It is easy to be caught up in materialism and the ambition that goes with it. In my daily life I want to grab everything I can lay my hands on. We live in an explosive world. Unless there is a disarmament of the materialism in each of us, there cannot be any other disarmament. Without a cure to poverty of spirit, material poverty will never be solved. If we can find out why we are alive, we will then know how we should live.

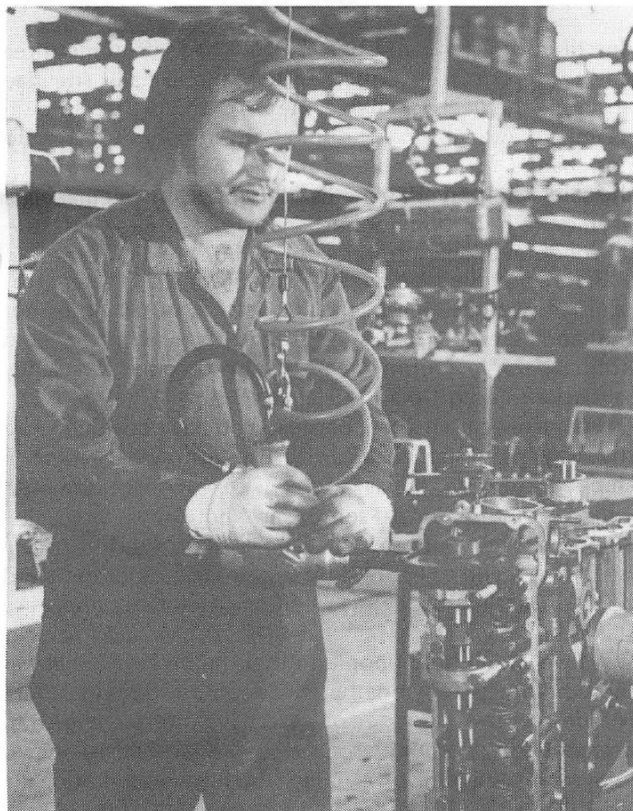
I met people at the Dialogue who wanted to do all in their power to right the wrongs of the past. There were white Australians who wanted to make restitution for the settlers' misdeeds towards the Aborigines. And Aborigines who apologised to white Australians for their hatred, because they had come to realize that bitterness, far from solving their problems, would only add to them.

By the end of the Dialogue, people were launching on a new course in life. For some this meant simple adjustments of habit, for others costly sacrifices. A housewife told us that

she had decided to get up half an hour earlier in the morning so that she could take better care of her husband. A couple from Perth decided to offer the use of their home to the work of MRA. Some resolved to pocket their pride and make restitution for past dishonesty. Others apologised for their feelings of superiority and decided to treat everyone as equals.

When I started to be concerned about the world around me I realised that I could not make any effective contribution until I got rid of my hate. I wrote and asked forgiveness from a man with whom I had had a bitter clash some years before.

And so the spirit of the Dialogue will live on in those who have taken up its challenge. ■



Motor works, Melbourne

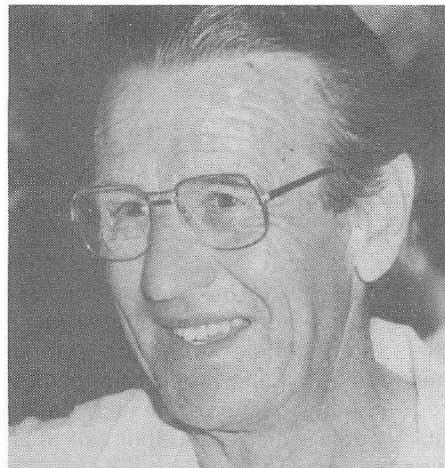
'We are conscious that industry is in fact responsibility—responsibility to people.'

## Industry

THE INDUSTRIAL WORKING GROUP called for the application of 'a new industrial ethic' which recognised that 'industry is responsibility to people, and not just those people within the industry itself'.

The group issued a statement which read in part, 'Unemployment plunges many into a predicament which is not merely financial but profoundly psychological....This condition is the normal life of millions in other countries, at income levels far below what Australia calls the poverty line.' Since Australian primary industries and raw materials sustained life and manufacturing in many countries overseas, 'industrial relations and management affect many industries and consequently millions of lives across the world'.

Roy Cox,  
company chairman,  
Melbourne



A Weeks

Industry, the statement goes on, transmits social values. Demonstrating this new ethic, industry would foster 'the healing of social divisions, the answer to class war' as well as transmitting 'an ideology of inspired common sense'.

People from boardroom and shopfloor gave evidence that such an ethic is already gaining ground.

Roy Cox, Chairman of W L Allen Foundry in Melbourne, described how, years earlier, he had started a business in a small, run-down foundry, where eight men worked in filthy conditions. He had told them that ten per cent of the company profits would go to charity, 25 per cent to the workforce, and the rest to the company and tax. The profits were still used in the same way and the workers, now 75 in number, owned all except a few shares and ran the company themselves.

Mr Cox told of his long struggle to improve working conditions, to minimise dirt and noise in the foundry. His had been the first foundry in the Commonwealth to install an electric furnace, and technology had been used to 'widen the scope of the company', not cause unemployment. He attributed the achievements of his company and the good relationship with the unions to his decision, 25 years earlier, to run his business in whatever way God showed him.

A senior executive in a multi-national mining and engineering company told of a six-month hidden debate in his company, over a costly technical error. Ultimately, conscience prevailed and his company voluntarily repaid Australian \$10 million to its customers.

An airline engineer described his continuing efforts to start a dialogue between senior management and ordinary union members and staff. This had begun with a vast meeting in a hangar when top management had stated their position.

'My fear is that the union movement has lost its goals,' said Jim Beggs, President of the Melbourne Branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation, the most powerful union on the Australian docks. 'Unless we learn how to co-operate and find consensus with those we put on the other side of the fence, we have lost the concept of the new order we are fighting for.' He felt this co-operation would come about as people found loyalty to larger goals, such as those outlined in the working group's statement. 'Our biggest enemies today are moral apathy and selfish materialism. They lie in all of us,' he concluded.

Mr Cox summed up, 'This idea that the world's problems are insurmountable is utter rubbish. It is only people that are the problems, and if they get onto the right answers, I tell you it works.' ■

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'Let's prepare our children to have a goal in life greater than a constantly increasing standard of living.'

## Family and Education

PARENTS SHOULD BEWARE of letting schools 'do their own thing', Lance Vertigan, a deputy principal in an inner-city Melbourne school, warned the working group on schools and homes. 'Many parents are happy to hand over all responsibility to schools,' he said. 'But the value structure of our schools is the responsibility of us all, not just of those who are running them.'

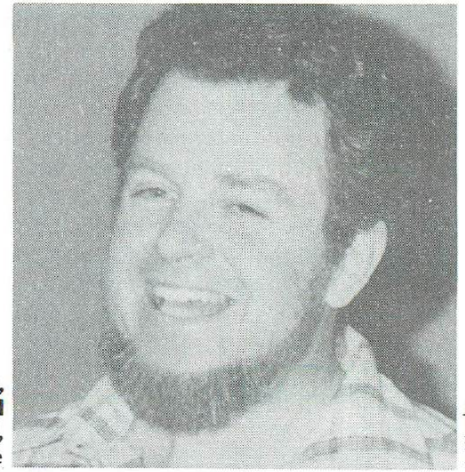
'We must resist the temptation of loading onto schools all the unanswered problems of society—unemployment, unwanted pregnancies, rising drug abuse and so on. Schools cannot opt out. But they must be able to work in partnership with parents.'

Great importance was given to ecological impact studies—such as how felling trees affects possums—Mr Vertigan went on. Less thought was given to 'human ecology'—how our values, attitudes and behaviour cause suffering to others.

Some forms of education produced irresponsible attitudes, said Richard Pearce, an engineer from Wellington. He and his wife had been taking part in a campaign in New Zealand schools to confront the 'morality of convenience' which encouraged self-gratification. Living for self-gratification was not compatible with responsibility, he said.

'We had to find the courage to put forward positive policies,' continued Mr Pearce. He had decided to apply absolute moral values in every area of his personal life and work for a society where everyone had a chance of dignity and hope. 'When you do that you see the sterility of mere opposition.' Then you could find compassion for those whose policies you disliked and the wisdom to deal with them in the most productive way.

'The trend which weakens all of us today is that of trying to avoid commitment and suffering,' said Betty Bailey, who



Lance Vertigan,  
deputy school  
principal,  
Melbourne

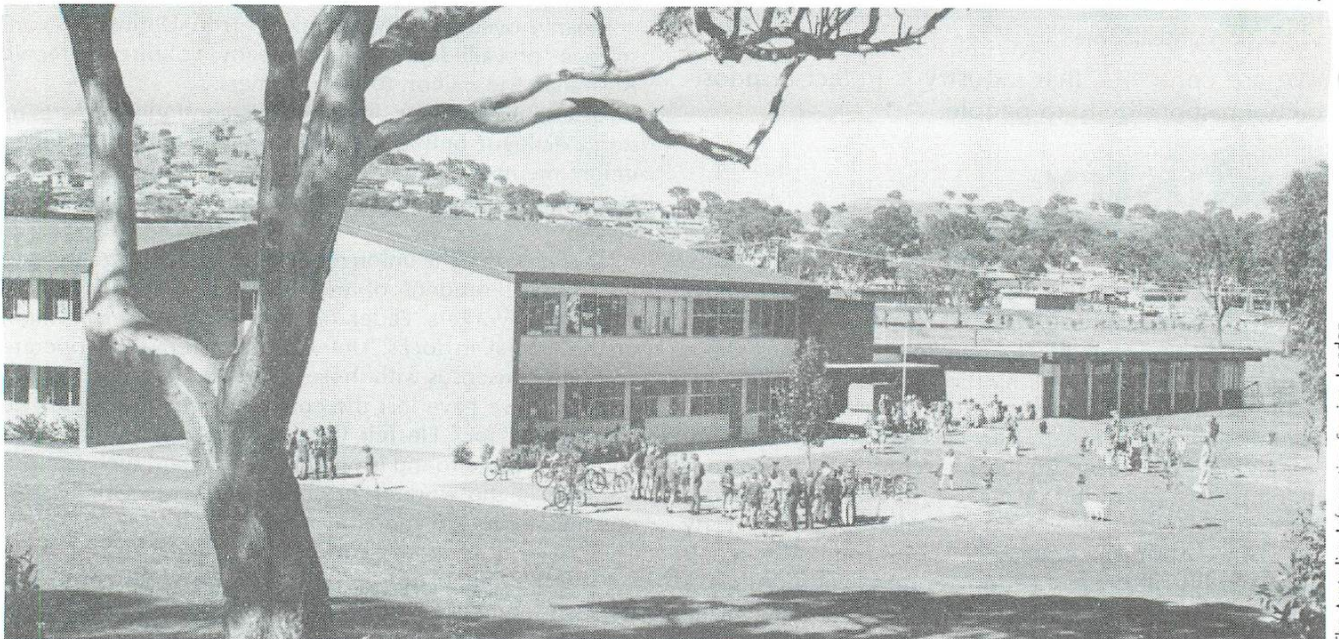
A Weeks

described how she and her children had left home three times after quarrels with her husband. Finally she had arrived at the decision that 'come hell or high water I would never run away again'. The situation with her husband did not change. 'But because of my decision, I was different,' she said. Then one day she had felt that God was making a promise to her—that her husband would turn to God if she decided never again to reject him in her heart.

Before he died at an early age four years later, that promise was fulfilled. In the final stages of his illness her husband asked her how she had gone on loving him. 'I did not have the love in my heart that he needed,' Mrs Bailey said, 'but I asked God and He gave it.'

'You are what you are, because you have decided to be that way,' said Stan Shepherd. He told how he had been shipped to Australia as a boy with 23 other homeless children. 'In the normal sense I have not known family life. Some people would say I had been deprived, but I have been privileged to be used by God to help other deprived people. That has brought a richness which rich people are starved of.'

A love which held people to their highest potential was more helpful than sympathy, Mr Shepherd went on. 'There is a destiny for every person. We have the free choice to accept it or to go our own self-willed ways. You will never know what that destiny is unless you have unconditionally



Primary school, Canberra

The Australian Information Service, London

said "yes" to God and begun to obey Him.'

Fostering this search for destiny was what school and home were all about, the group concluded. In the words of Kim Beazley, who was Minister for Education in three governments, perhaps the main function of education was 'to fill the imagination with purposes, hopes, ideas, goals, perception and self-perception which develop warmth and understanding towards fellow human-beings'. Or, as he also said, 'to create an enlightened and sensitive conscience, the basis of selflessness and responsibility'. ■



A Weeks

Jean Brown

### Jean Brown Canberra

FEMINISM is probably the most decisive factor for the future of the family. When it has meant the ruthless demand of a suppressed sector of society for its own way, it has helped to destroy home life and partnership. But the feminism which recognises the equal dignity of all people and inspires a whole-hearted concern for all can be a creative force for a new future.

As a fairly passionate women's libber in my teens and twenties I found liberation when I stopped competing and decided that I was as responsible for society as anybody else. To my amazement I found glorious freedom through accepting absolute moral standards; then God gave me a peace of heart I had never believed possible.

There are three positions one can adopt in marriage—back to back, where you pursue a policy of separate development; face to face, where you are totally absorbed in each other and in the family; and side by side, where you are going in the same direction. That is true partnership.

In our marriage I have chosen to be the 'house-spouse'. It is a privilege, I feel, to be helping to shape the future with and through our son. It is a damnable lie that fulfilment lies only outside the home. Many women are blackmailed by this and feel they have to justify being on home duty. They say, 'It won't be for long. As soon as Johnny goes to pre-school I can get back to work.' I am not against working women. But I am against the arrogant and destructive view that 'just' being at home is a second best. It is one of the most creative jobs there is.

We are living on a tidal wave of rights. If I feel I have a right to anything—welfare, work, love, fresh air—I preclude the possibility of gratitude. Why should I be grateful for what is mine by right? Gratitude is the sacrificial lamb on the altar of demand and that is dangerous for society. I have a favourite quotation: 'Gratitude is the insurance of the soul against the powers of darkness.' If we lose gratitude, we lose that insurance. Then the soul of modern man is at the mercy of darkness. ■

### Chie Takahashi Japan

IN JAPAN people ask the name of your university rather than the subjects you studied. That name affects the rest of your life. I believed that a person's value was shown by their school records.

When I saw that my younger sister was doing well at school I felt insecure. I hated being compared with her. I was afraid that my parents might discuss our school records with relatives or neighbours. The only way I could see of doing better than her was to get into Tokyo University.

I studied hard, making the most of my spare moments and shirking my other responsibilities. I was under great pressure. It seemed that I would have to give up my long-standing ambition and I couldn't imagine what my future would be without it. There were no studies which interested me. And I did not have one close friend.

My cousins, who had spent some time in Australia working with MRA, seemed happy in spite of such misfortunes as their father's death, a traffic accident and unemployment. There must be something in Australia, I thought, which I was looking for.

I decided to say goodbye to my past which had been influenced by what others did or thought of me and to learn more about MRA. The people I met said that God had a plan for everyone. I felt tremendously relieved. 'Maybe my sister and I have been given different plans,' I thought. 'Why should I compare myself with her and exhaust myself'. It helped me to leave the jealousy which I had been tied to for almost 10 years.

I wrote her a long letter from Australia, asking her forgiveness. Then I felt a deep love for her. A few days later she rang up from Japan to thank me.

Home was not a restful place. But I realise that I was the one who was making the family uncomfortable. There are many things I would like to do differently when I return. I am grateful that I can look forward to it. ■



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School for blind children, Sydney



Reg Blow (left), adviser to the Victorian Minister dealing with Aboriginal Affairs, with Kim Beazley, former Federal Education Minister

'We are all migrants in Australia. Together we must be responsible for the historical problems of the country and wrestle to find solutions.'

## Race

'AUSTRALIA is the most cosmopolitan nation in the world except Israel,' E M Holmes, deputy Dean of Economics at Melbourne University, told the working group on race. 'We are experiencing a demographic revolution.' He explained that four out of ten Australians were either immigrants or their children. Twenty-one per cent were either born in non-English-speaking countries or were children of such people. There were 70 ethnic communities.

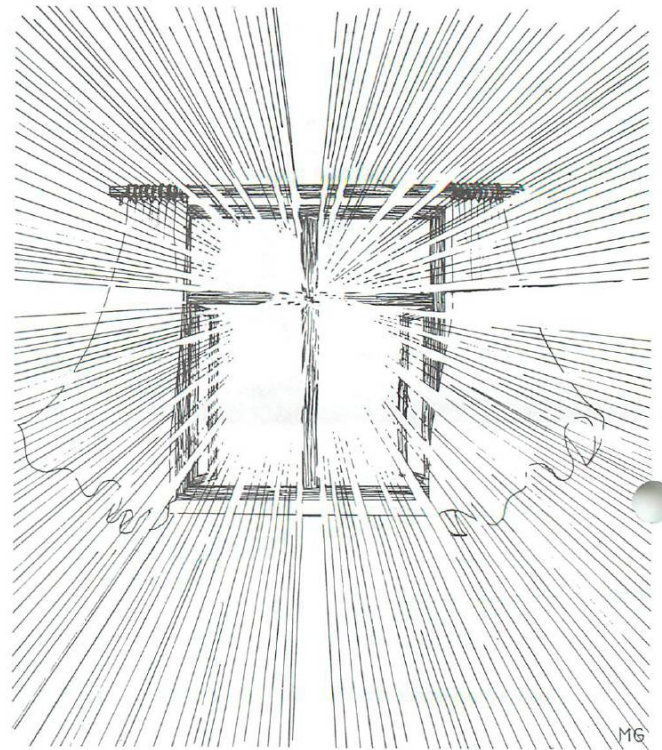
These facts highlighted the urgent need to examine attitudes to race. 'I have had bitterness towards the whites,' said Reg Blow, special adviser to the Victorian Minister who deals with Aboriginal affairs. 'It is deeply entrenched in my race. But since meeting Moral Re-Armament I've found that there's a better way to see things. My horizons were sufficiently broadened to take in all the new ideas that came to me.'

Last year Mr Blow and Steve Hagan, an Aboriginal civil servant, had attended a conference in India with T H Ramsay, a senior executive in the oil and gas division of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company which markets most of Australia's crude oil. Mr Ramsay said that he learnt then, for the first time, how Aboriginal people felt, as well as much of their background and history. 'I realised we have mineral resources in this country second to none; but equally valid are the spiritual resources the Aboriginal people have been developing these thousands of years. Both are given by God and we are charged with seeing how they can be developed for the benefit of the whole world.'

He decided to find ways to help his friends in the mining and oil business to understand the Aborigines' situation and 'how together we can develop the resources of the country in a way that is right for everyone'. He had started by arranging for Mr Blow to speak at a luncheon of the Australian Institute of Petroleum (Victoria Branch).

Mr Ramsay had also asked Mr Blow for his unofficial comments on a code of behaviour for mining and exploration groups in their relations with Aborigines—a hot issue in Australia. Mr Ramsay passed on Mr Blow's comments to the editors, who were now revising the code. 'Some people see confrontation as the only way,' commented Mr Ramsay. 'Many believe that we can resolve these questions on a basis of reconciliation. I am encouraged by what we've been able to do so far.' ■

# PRAYER AND THE RISK BUSINESS...



## ...in the convent

by Sister Francis Teresa, a Poor Clare nun

SINCE I WAS ASKED to set something down on prayer, two prayers on the lines of 'make this person what you want them to be' have been answered in so dramatic a way that one person broke a leg in two places and the other had a series of coronaries and hung between life and death. This kind of experience can radically modify one's enthusiasm for prayer, whether one prays daily or uses it as a kind of last-chance panacea.

How does one make sense of such answers to prayer? I am an enclosed nun, and people sometimes think I know something about prayer. Occasionally they even think that I know something about God. I used to think so too, but gradually my certitudes about God have coalesced into the single awareness that He is truly Lord of life and death, Lord of history. Prayer somehow opens a window through which His blazing reality floods into our front parlours. This happens time and again until the flood, and our own efforts, eventually dismantle our protecting walls. Prayer then emerges as a way of being, rather than doing. It shows itself in an acceptance of God's pattern, a reverence and sense of peace about His ways.

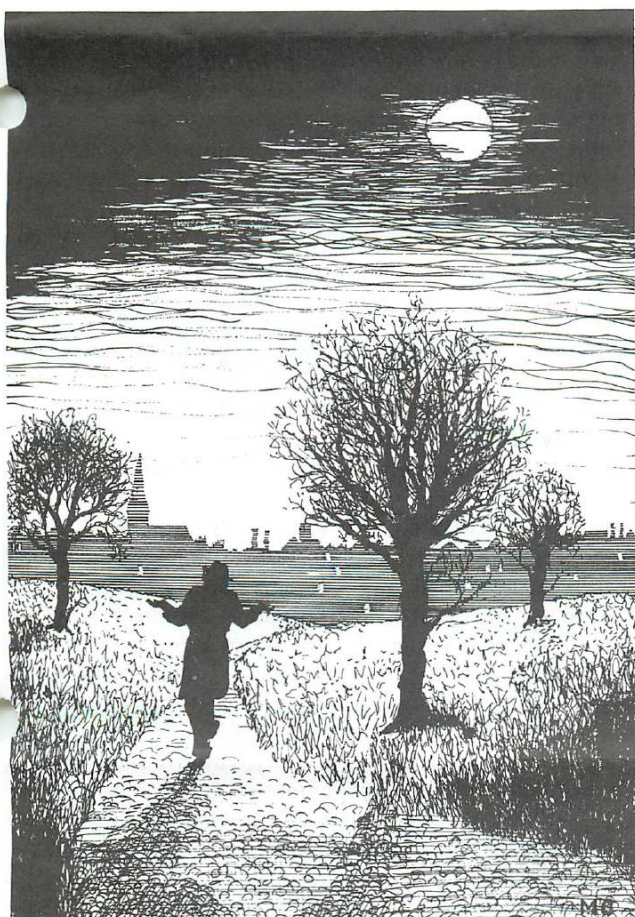
Our ability to pray is not revealed because something happens to the person prayed for. Rather it is shown by whether we have the guts to continue to pray, 'make him what you want him to be' and to add 'and change me to make this possible'. For we are all interacting parts of a

whole, which is only another way of saying that we are all incorporated into Christ. We need each other. We also need to help each other grow in our relations with other people and with God.

The only rule about how to pray seems to be—give it time. Spend time allowing the reality of God, which can be as healing and as penetrating as a laser, to reach the secret place where our real selves hide. Give it time, too, in the sense of allowing prayer to grow slowly. Don't look for quick results in ourselves, or in others. It is a life we are seeking, not a skill we are mastering. Life means growth and growth takes time.

Saint Teresa maintained that the only test of progress in prayer is how we are loving. In other words, the quality of our relationships reveals the quality of our prayer. There is no other yardstick.

Many books have been written on prayer—how to do it, how not to do it, when, where, why, for how long and so on. Abbot Chapman concluded, 'Pray as you can and not as you can't.' What better can be said? ■



## ...in the theatre

by Ronald Mann

UNDERSTANDING PRAYER is like understanding water. You get a new idea of it when you take your feet off the bottom and try to swim out of your depth.

I find a new understanding of prayer when I deliberately take on a task which is beyond my powers. During the last ten years I have been producing plays aimed at giving

faith and purpose to those who see them. In the theatre they say that the unusual days are the ones without a crisis. So often the most important time of prayer for me is in the evening, when I take a 20-minute walk near my home. Sometimes it is a time of thankfulness for what God has done. Sometimes it is a question of regaining the security that God knows and cares through all the difficulties that have arisen.

## Don Camillo

The problems may be financial—whether the box office take will cover the actors' wages, or where on earth to find another £10,000. For the past ten years, there has hardly been a week when I have not been trying to raise between £10,000 and £120,000 for different productions.

Or I may be concerned about a conflict between author and director, or between director and composer. Or about the play itself. If you are staging a new play, you often have to go ahead with the production plans and theatre bookings before the script is finalised. You get to the point when it is too late to turn back—and yet the most important part (it generally seems to be the ending) will not come right. Sometimes you think you know how it should be done, but the author does not agree. Tens of thousands will see what finally appears on the stage. They will judge it as it is, not as you had hoped it would be.

My evening 'conversation' is often of a Don Camillo kind, that goes something like this:

'What on earth have I got into? I don't see how we can get through this one.'

'Why are you worrying? I told you to do it. Even if you have made mistakes you have done so in good faith believing it to be My will, and that will be honoured.' Then almost inevitably comes the thought, 'If you want no success or approval for yourself, you can be at peace.'

Often the realisation follows that I am more worried over what someone may think about my action, than about the problem itself. As I renew my decision, 'Yes, Lord, I do not really want anything except to do Your will and be satisfied in You,' without fail I am at peace.

## Dependent on launching

Immediately, or some time later, I begin to get ideas on how to deal with the problem in hand. These generally lead to some new phase of God's plan—for being drawn into God's purposes seems to follow finding peace as summer follows spring. It enables me to depend on the Holy Spirit working in other people's lives, as well as my own. And sometimes the crisis I am worrying about does not happen anyway, or solves itself.

The marvel and reality of this kind of prayer is God's gift to all who take risks. It depends on launching out again and again in faith, taking up the task which in my innermost being I feel God calling me to.

I find an old hymn helpful: 'He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own; and the joy we share as we tarry there none other has ever known.' I also repeat Ignatius Loyola's prayer: 'Teach me good Lord to serve Thee as Thou deservest. To give and not to count the cost. To fight and not to heed the wounds. To toil and not to seek for rest. To labour and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing that I do Thy will.' ■

# WHAT FUTURE FOR THE POLISH TREE?

by Rex Dilly

SOME PUNDITS have been quick to write the death certificate of Solidarity, the Polish free trade union. They point to the earlier crushing of revolt in Hungary and of the liberal movement in Czechoslovakia's 'Prague Spring'. But Poland today is quite a different case for several reasons.

Poland's popular movement draws its inspiration and strength from religious faith. The election of a Polish Pope and his visit to Poland released powerful forces in the people. Neal Ascherson, Eastern Europe correspondent for three British papers, vividly assesses the impact of the Pope's visit in his well-chronicled book, *The Polish August*. 'These were days that once revealed and changed the nation. For anyone who travelled round Poland with John Paul II, it took time to become normal again. In dreams, one walked still over strewn flowers, in the long glare of the sun. On the screen of closed eyelids, one saw again those long, long Indian files of men, women and children walking through waist-high, green meadows on their way to meet this man...

'This was called a pilgrimage, a papal journey to honour the martyr St Stanislaw, slain by a Polish king 900 years before. (The king lost his throne, the martyr became Poland's patron saint.) It was a demonstration that after 35 years of Communist rule the Church was still an overwhelming force in the nation. But it demonstrated not so much defiance of the regime as the truth about positive feelings.'

Solidarity with its ten million members and as many supporters may be subdued. But the spirit and idea live on. This movement for reform follows several since the Communists took power in 1947. The Polish people's philosophy seems to be 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try, again.'



To quote Neal Ascherson again, 'In 1944, we thought, the tree of Polish history had been sawn down for good, and a new house had been built over the stump. In 1968, some holes had appeared in the floor of the house, and certain uninviting parts of the stump could be seen through them. But in the mid-1970s, as the floor began to disintegrate, the truth of what was taking place could no longer be ignored: the tree was growing again, shoving its huge, amputated head up through all the concrete laid on top of it. All of Poland's political and spiritual traditions were reviving, as people reconnected the present to the years before that "new beginning" marked by the July Manifesto of 1944. Each successive shock—1970, 1976 and finally 1980—broke

away more pieces of the house that Gomulka had founded a generation before. And each time, more of this buried but ominously authentic Polish consciousness emerged into the light.'

Desperate economic conditions have lain at the root of some of Solidarity's demands. Unless these conditions improve dramatically they will continue to fuel fires of change which no political formula nor strong policing will assuage. The combined efforts of both people and government will be required to put right the economy. So no power will be able to administer Poland without the full co-operation of the people.

If the Soviet Union intervened militarily they would have to reckon with this factor. Nor would they be able to take for granted the support of the Polish army, which consists mainly of conscripts drawn from factories, farms and universities. It is hard to imagine them marching against their kin.

People ask whether General Jaruzelski, the Prime Minister, is a patriot who took control of the country to avoid intervention by the Soviet Union or whether he is ideologically committed to Marxist Communism and finds himself having to do the Soviets' bidding. At the moment this is in the realm of speculation. It is, however, certain that he faces a dilemma. For he is having to meet some of Solidarity's demands by dismissing ministers and officials for inefficiency and corruption while, at the same time, having to convince the Soviet rulers that he has the strength to control events in Poland.



Yet another factor makes Poland today different from the Hungary of 1956 or the Czechoslovakia of 1968. It appears that the Soviet Union, although better armed, is ideologically much weaker. Her ideology is bankrupt of ideas that can attract thinkers or idealists. It is unable to kindle hope, supply a satisfying philosophy, nor even give people in the Soviet Bloc an adequate standard of living.

I am convinced that we are standing on the threshold of great changes in Eastern Europe and that Soviet-type Communism is in decline. This is not an anti-Communist, political statement, but a fundamental ideological one. For man's hunger for faith and freedom is inevitably coming into conflict with fear and oppression. Solidarity is asserting itself, not by confrontation but by concept, not by theory but by truth.

Poland may be destined to forge a society based on respect for God's authority and man's dignity, a society free of hate, fear and greed. This struggle is equally relevant for the non-Communist world. Is the free world ready to co-operate in filling the ideological vacuum which the demise of Communism would leave? Poland's challenge is whether the moral and spiritual fabric of our own society is strong enough for us to help rebuild nations denied their true heritage.

*'The Polish August'*, by Neal Ascherson, Penguin Books, 1981, price pb £2.50. ■

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WORLD  
NEWS**

Published fortnightly for Moral Re-Armament by The Good Road Ltd, 12 Palace Street, London SW1E 5JF, England. Printed by T W Pegg and Sons Ltd. Registered as a periodical at the Post Office. Articles may be reproduced without reference to the editor, acknowledgement welcomed. Price 18p. 10 copies £1.50 plus postage.

**Annual subscriptions:** British isles £8.50 (2 copies of each issue £12.00); all other countries airmail £9.00. **Regional offices and rates:** **Australia** New World News, PO Box 1078J, GPO Melbourne, Vic 3001 \$17.00; **Canada** Moral Re-Armament, 387 Chemin de la Cote Ste Catherine, Montreal, Quebec H2V 2B5 \$24.00; **New Zealand** MRA Information Service, PO Box 4198, Christchurch \$22.50; **South Africa** Moral Re-Armament, PO Box 10144, Johannesburg R17.00; **USA** Moral Re-Armament Inc, 1030 Fifteenth Street NW, Suite 908, Washington DC 20005 \$20.00. **Editorial and business address:** 12 Palace Street, London SW1E 5JF. Tel: 01-828 6591.