

GLOBAL CONSULTATION on MRA's WORLD FINANCES
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INTRODUCTION

As the deepening fall turned Canada's famed maples a brilliant red and gold, we gathered in a delightful forest lodge in the Gatineau Hills of Quebec, a few miles across the river from Ottawa.

We were 25 people from 14 nations - a happy mix of "full-time workers" (FTWs) and "non full-time", women and men - and as we began our deliberations we felt both heavy responsibility and high expectation. World-wide, MRA seems to be going through great readjustments, with signs of growth and symptoms of decline side by side. The questions of finance embrace all major issues in our work - our philosophy, our aims, our ways of doing things.

Transparency, no generalization and no judgement became the three guiding thoughts in our attitudes to one another and to the varied and delicate issues we were called upon to address. Without these no trust would have been possible between us, and without these no trust is possible in our work at large.

One friend said: "Mistrust within our team is a bigger obstacle than all our needs for personnel or money. With me it is often a question of jealousy or a sense of inferiority. I want to do my best to make our finances transparent. This is a directive from this meeting for myself."

Transparency is needed in the way we make decisions and circulate information - we live in an age that requires it more and more. As a world force we may have to review some old ways. Have we, at times, practised secrecy when what was needed was only a measure of confidentiality? We also acknowledged the need to respect the autonomy and authority of our various legal bodies.

As we grappled with these issues, we felt that the expression "faith and prayer" was limited. A literal interpretation of the phrase has led in many cases to a passive attitude when, in fact, a dynamic and searching one is needed. An expected gift is just as much

God's provision as an unexpected one. In God lies our fundamental reason for action, and the power by which we hope to achieve anything, including raising money. But responsibility, imagination, an understanding of today's world and the complexity of finance are' also important ingredients. "Where God guides He provides" seemed to us to be a more complete formula for everybody, whatever our situation.

It did not seem appropriate to fill a report like this with lots of figures and we would be happy to answer requests for further information in this regard. Two figures alone, however, dramatize the situation we face:

- Needed renovations at Caux over the next 5 years will cost a minimum of SFr 3,500,000.
- A suitable base in New York for an expanded work with the United Nations could cost US\$ 1,200,000.

We evaluated the increasing numbers of opportunities, contacts and initiatives for MRA which are generating new impetus. But we seem to be restricted in our ability to respond to these opportunities. We perceive some trends and realities, such as:

1. In many countries, the age profile of both FTWs and non-FTWs is weighted towards the middle aged and elderly.
2. A smaller proportion of young and newly committed people is giving to MRA.
3. Fewer fulltime workers are living communally in MRA centres. Many now live in one family homes, whether owned by MRA or by individuals.
4. Government restrictions and requirements on both MRA bodies and FTWs are increasing.
5. MRA bodies tend to be asset-rich but cash-short at a time when there is an increasing demand for cash, especially for travel costs, supporting FTWs and running our centres.
6. The number of legacies may start to decline significantly in 10 to 15 years' time.
7. Raising money for projects and campaigns is easier than for general needs.
8. It is sometimes difficult for those engaged in financial administration for MRA bodies to combine this with the outreaching, "lifechanging" work of MRA.
9. Less spontaneous giving, but more structured giving.
10. An increase in issue- and region-oriented initiatives.
11. Greater access to new resources, such as government funding, outside the traditional means of financing MRA.

We need a strategy to respond to these trends and realities, which would establish our priorities.

FOR WHAT DO WE NEED MONEY?

We opened the agenda with this question, which we saw as central to our ability to raise money from whatever source. Some people willingly contribute for the continuation of a work they know and love, and our gratitude goes out to each one, but they are few in comparison to the scale of the funding needed.

What is MRA undertaking today? Towards what aims or visions are we inviting donors to contribute? In business language, what is our "mission statement"?

There was neither the time nor a mandate to attempt to formulate a fresh expression of our aims and global vision, but one of our central conclusions was that we need to do it and that it should be considered in depth at a later Consultation. Out of it would flow a coherent program or strategy, capable of inspiring both the confidence and the imagination of potential donors, as well as creating fresh life-changing opportunities in all our countries.

REMOVING OBSTACLES TO GIVING

We acknowledged with sorrow that occasionally we have ourselves acted in ways that made it harder or less attractive for people to give. Vital to seeing this clearly was the fact that those with experience of both giving and receiving were well represented among us.

We would offer the following check-list as an aide-memoire. Some of the points may seem elementary, but overlooking them has caused problems:

1. Donors should be thanked promptly.
2. An accurate and imaginative description of our purposes.
3. Realistic budgeting for what we propose to do.
4. Transparency is vital, especially in our financial arrangements and our decision making procedures, along with full openness about our financial situation.
5. Full and early inclusion of potential donors in the planning and execution of operations, and reports of progress when these are under way, so that no person feels taken for granted.
6. It is far easier to secure gifts for some envisaged action than to pay off a debt.
7. It is important that the same person should not receive a series of uncoordinated requests for support. One "rule of thumb" to help avoid this is to approach people directly only if we are in close personal contact with them. If we are not, go through someone who is.
8. Funds must be used for the purpose for which they are given.
9. Our vision for donors must extend beyond the money they give.
10. Our intention must be to help people find God's plan for their lives and resources. That is the true basis for giving and receiving.
11. The appearance of MRA centres and homes is important. It is possible for them to seem to be too affluent to attract support or to be too poorly fitted out to do the job for which they are intended.
12. Those of us who work "full-time" need to make good use of our time. There may be a need for training in use of time and focussing on priority objectives.
13. Donors need to see evidence of spiritual growth in and around the individuals or actions they support.
14. It can be off-putting, as well as difficult, to ask for money for yourself. Often committed people in paid work can raise money in ways that full-time workers can not.
15. The importance of personal and corporate prayer in all our undertakings.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR FULL-TIME WORKERS

Our primary concern was the welfare and health of every last person called to God's task within the framework of MRA, and we discussed differing types and levels and the implications of financial assistance. In a few countries there have been compelling legal, social or cultural reasons for paying a salary or subsistence allowance. In others a more generous reimbursement of expenses as distinct from an allowance was seen to be the appropriate way to assist FTWs. It was agreed that health care and pension provision should be assured.

Salaries and Subsistence Allowances

In Japan, for instance, unearned income is considered more of a vice than a virtue - a wrong attitude of dependency, according to Confucianist and other social values. Personal gifts in place of a salary can be seen as a form of "nepotism" or favouritism, with unfortunate implications. Some people had said: "MRA is out to care for people but what about your own people?" In a situation where a country is rich, MRA is poor and there is no infrastructure for the FTWs to receive money in a traditional MRA way, a new way had to be found to fill this gap. The salaries paid, inclusive of health insurance and pension fund, are at the lower end of those paid by other non-government organizations.

In the United States a modest subsistence allowance is paid to FTWs in order that they may qualify for government financed health care and a small pension in later life.

In France, a similar situation, with variations, prevails in the case of some FTWs.

In Canada; it was pointed out, some donors want MRA to pay allowances so that their tax deductible donations can be applied to the benefit of FTWs.

"Tent-making"

In principle, no conflict was seen in FTWs adding to their income through the use of their skills. It was agreed that there should not be any expectation on the part of others that such should be done unless it was the conviction of the individual and was not a diversion from life-changing work.

Some FTWs felt that time was their most precious asset and, given other responsibilities, this precluded doing other work.

Instances were given of how strategic "tent-making" had led to a greater outreach. One participant made contact with outstanding leaders in the field of his particular concern through some translation work. Another earned enough in 3 days interpreting to pay his air travel across the world for MRA.

One plan in India is for companies to invite full-time workers as consultants for one or two days in a month to conduct MRA training programs for their personnel on payment of a fee direct to the full-time workers.

From Brazil came the conviction that the motive for tent-making should be crystal clear, a spiritual step forward taken in a way that availability to God is not affected.

New FTWs

We were impressed by the results of investigations carried out by Jean-Jacques Odier and others into the way other religious bodies arrange for the finances of their FTWs. Some have a policy that anyone who feels called to full-time work should first find a number of people who would pledge regular financial support for them, before they launch out "on the road". This was found to work well in a number of cases, helping new FTWs to take early responsibility for their financing and to have long term personal contact with supporters.

We also discussed the merits of paying potential FTWs a small "trainee allowance" while working with MRA under supervision for an initial period (a year?) before deciding whether they are called to longer term full-time work.

Combining these two ideas, ie. starting with a period on a trainee allowance followed by a well known and understood requirement to find sponsors before launching into full-time work longer term, seemed to have real possibilities in many of our countries.

Conclusions re FTWs

Mr Paranjape, a businessman from Pune in India, gave the following recommendation: "Full-time workers need more financial support and should be cared for in whatever ways are appropriate to suit local conditions, with adequate transparency, but not a payment that will attract the wrong people."

It was acknowledged that there was need for a more realistic costing of projects and actions and that estimates should include a factor for the cost of FTWs and overheads.

NEW SOURCES OF FUNDS

As is clear from the situation at Caux and elsewhere, not only the expansion but even the continuation of MRA's work depends on our finding major new sources of funding. As it was graphically put by one person: "We can go on finding different ways to slice the cake but in the end we have to realize that we need more cakes."

Our discussions under this heading focussed mostly on raising money from institutions - companies, foundations and governments. We would like to affirm that fresh people changed and committed are the best source of new funds, but felt it vital nonetheless to explore other avenues less well known to most of us.

Such experience as we already have in raising funds from institutions, particularly in Japan where this is the main source, shows that the winning of individuals' interest and enthusiastic cooperation is central. Often this can lead on to personal change and

commitment, and it must be our prayerful intention that it should be so, with or without success in obtaining grants.

The care that has gone into various industries for the past 20 years through the regular industrial seminars at Asia Plateau has resulted in a better industrial climate in different areas of India, and Jamshedpur in particular. There is a vibrant team among industrialists, ordinary workers and those in management who now give financial assistance to FTWs. Full note should be taken that the industrial seminars at Panchgani are a major source of income, not only for the conference centre but the work of MRA in India.

Government funding of specific projects, in the form of subsidies and grants, is a field to explore. In 1992 the Swiss Government made a grant towards the Russian historians' seminar in Caux and the French Government granted FF50,000 towards the dubbing and distribution of "For the Love of Tomorrow" video for Cambodia. In recent years the Australian Government has given grants for Aboriginal projects, including participation in the MRA Study Courses and a visit to Panchgani and other centres in India.

Principles of Fund-raising from Institutions

1. To win the trust of those involved in handling grant applications and if possible to have at least one convinced advocate of your cause on the decision making committee. Such allies within the institution may well advise as to how best to make the approach.
2. Present what you are doing on a broad canvas - eg. not just presenting a project but aiming to alter the moral and spiritual climate of the country.
3. However, it is important to address the nerve issue for each institution - democracy, better international relations, reconciliation, harmony in the cities, business ethics, etc. - and also to study carefully the institution's terms of reference, its grants policy and normal practice. For what exact purposes and to what timescale is it mandated to make grants?
4. Prepare an attractive and clear document of your aims and your needs: well done, but not too expensive looking, and accompanied by no more than a one-page letter.
5. Approaches to institutions take time and expertise. It may well make sense in some countries to consult outside experts, especially so where they have a personal interest in or commitment to MRA.
6. Institutions normally fund projects, not other institutions or general programmes. For example, it is much more likely that grants could be obtained to fund the participation of a particular delegation at a specific session at Caux than to fund the needs of Caux itself.

Other ways to find new funds were raised more briefly, especially the approach to corporations and institutions by younger people for particular projects, such as transport for a campaign.

TRANS-NATIONAL FUNDING

We examined the existing situation where an international work is funded via official bodies operating on a national basis. In some countries MRA teams can call on more funds than in others, and the difference can be marked. In addition, national (as opposed to international) control of funds can cast some in the role of givers and others as receivers. Unwise financing from some countries can lead to an over-reliance and even a separation of MRA from its indigenous roots in the recipient country.

Some funds for international travel are distributed via informal channels which rely heavily on personal friendships. While this system appears to work reasonably well, it may sustain patterns of dependency. It is clear that increasing amounts are going to be needed for international travel. It was suggested that the Coordination Group consider these questions.

As we talked we realized how little the experiences, problems, triumphs and lessons from each of our countries are relayed to each other. We have not communicated enough among those of us who handle MRA's finances in different parts of the world. As a first step to putting this right, Ashwin Patel has drafted a questionnaire designed to give a profile of MRA's finances in each country, and is offering to collate the responses he gets and communicate the information. He will be writing appropriate persons in each country with documentation about this.

We also wish to encourage informal meetings between people responsible for MRA finances in different countries who are at Caux at the same time.

We felt the need for, and applauded, the growing solidarity of our world force on financial and other matters - caring for each other both as individuals and as MRA bodies.

CAUX - A MORE RESPONSIBLE WORLD APPROACH

Caux is the heart of our outreach to the world. Carrying the conferences is the one big thing we do together. Despite the powerful miracles that originate there, as far as finance and manpower are concerned it is still a weak link in our global operations.

The Consultation took the best part of one whole day assessing the financial situation of Caux and evaluating its present and future role and needs. We were sobered to learn how large a proportion of the annual budget is carried by the Swiss. We all felt that:

- The funding of Caux is a world responsibility.
- New sources of finance for Caux must be explored and tapped.
- We should be reminded that 30 years ago Peter Howard had urged that a substantial capital fund be established for Caux.

Hence the following recommendations and convictions:

1. More careful screening of applications and, as far as possible, preplanning on the financing of each delegate. This concerns all our teams around the world and, we realize, those drafting the Caux invitation and the secretariat.
2. Presentation of long term needs and plans for major renovations and improvements.
3. A shopping list, with all needs in kind, should be drafted for use with industry as well as with individuals.
4. Our meeting represented a strong desire in our world force to see how, internationally, a capital fund might be created and developed to support major renovations.
5. We were mindful of the Dingy Consultation of September 1990. We applauded New Zealand's sending young people to help run Caux in 1991 and 1992, but regretted all our failure to increase the size of the permanent team in Caux which we believe is essential.
6. We supported our Swiss friends' efforts with the rental of the Caux buildings between conferences. They would welcome suggestions.

There was extensive discussion on other aspects and further ideas are being conveyed to our Swiss friends.

UNITED NATIONS - A MORE ACTIVE PRESENCE

The recent granting to MRA of NGO (non-government organization) status at the UN has greatly facilitated our work there. After a thorough discussion of the topic, we unanimously welcomed the proposed international effort in the UN and the establishment of an MRA centre in New York, fully aware of the purchase, setting up and running costs and of the need for staffing.

We see it as the pursuit of MRA's global outreach to the leadership of nations into the next century.

This focuses two of the recurring themes of our consultations:

- The raising of NEW finance
- Coordinated and effective global responsibility for financial and personnel resources.

CONCLUSIONS

One person summarized the current situation as follows: "MRA's problem is the present under-utilization of its money, manpower and contacts. The fact that we have more than 400 FTWs world wide should not be underestimated. We need a strategy and an awareness of the areas of opportunity for MRA, to ensure that our financial and personnel resources are concentrated on these areas of growth. This will demand great coordination."

Another person underlined the fact that it will also mean us looking at priorities - "stopping some things in order to accomplish others".

In this perspective the following general conclusions emerged - additional to the specific recommendations and action points highlighted in the body of the report.

1. Financial arrangements should be appropriate to suit local conditions, with adequate transparency.
2. More realistic costing for projects and actions and detailed budgeting is required. This should include an estimate of the value of work contributed by FTWs. Overheads should also be included. The purpose is to ensure that the cost of general operations is supported by specific projects.
3. The time of FTWs is a precious resource to be stewarded sensibly.
4. New sources of finance are both accessible and needed.
5. We can and must carry financial questions - especially relating to Caux - more effectively as a world team.

COORDINATION GROUP

We were pleased to receive from the newly created international Coordination Group the report of their inaugural meeting which took place in Ottawa a few days prior to our Consultation. This has been sent to BULLETIN readers. As most of those involved were with us we were able to have valuable discussion with them about how they saw their role and the most effective pursuit of it.

NEXT CONSULTATION

We were confirmed in our conviction that the consultation process was working well and should be continued. Possible themes and venues for the next Global Consultation in 1993 were discussed and we are forwarding our recommendations to the Support Group for consideration and action.

Charles Aquilina, USA - Jenny Bocoock, Canada - Claude Bourdin, France
Alice Cardel, Philippines - Angela Elliott, USA - Chris Evans, UK
Yukihisa Fujita, Japan - Gerhard Grob, Switzerland - Bryan Hamlin, USA
Rene Hodel, Switzerland - Joan Holland, NZ - Geraldine Hughes, Canada
Rob Lancaster, USA - Philippe Lasserre, France
Chris & Janet Mayor, Australia - Keith Newman, Canada - Bob Painter, Canada
N G Paranjape, India - Ashwin Patel, Kenya - Luis Puig, Brazil
Vijayalakshmi Subrahmanyam, India - Ralph Travers, South Africa
Peter Vickers, UK - Richard Weeks, Canada