



NEWSLETTER Number 4

May 1999

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EARLY MEDIA INTEREST

In the last days of April, we have had the first serious media interest in the campaign. The trigger was a front page article and cartoon in *The Church Times*, partly fair and factual, but also missing the point of the campaign by making out that one of its aims is to get people to confess in public. This theme was picked up by *The Daily Telegraph* the following day, in spite of a detailed interview conducted by its writer. Balance was restored by them printing a letter in a prominent position the following day, in which I stressed that privacy is one of the campaign's ground rules. *The Oxford Mail* interviewed Christopher Morgan and myself on the day of the *Telegraph* article, and printed a piece, with photo, next day which picked up the 'confession' theme. Both *The Oxford Mail* and *The Church Times* published letters from me the following week.

The *Telegraph* article sparked radio interest, starting with a live interview live (four minutes) on BBC Radio 5 on April 24th. Two BBC local radios followed – Three Counties Radio (based in Luton) and Radio Thames Valley. Radio Suffolk and others are in the pipeline.

In all these interviews I have stressed that the campaign is about private action not public confession; that we are interested to hear about 'cleaning' not about 'dirty slates' – there is more than enough of the latter in the media already!

Meanwhile, some regional newspapers have been showing interest, though we do not know any articles which have yet appeared.

These are early days, but there is clearly the beginning of a groundswell of interest in the campaign. As you will see from the news highlights overleaf, there are some interesting initiatives to make the Clean Slate idea known. Please keep spreading the word!

Edward Peters, Campaign Chairman

MAJOR UPGRADE TO OUR WEBSITE

By the time you read this, our website should have received a substantial upgrade – thanks to the work of Phoebe Gill. As well as the text of the Guide, a list of patrons, and some examples of slate cleaning, it now contains a description of 'How it began', some news of the campaign, a list of resources available (including downloadable files and pictures), and links to other sites.

Check us out at: www.cleanslate.org and ask your friends to visit!

FURTHER STORIES & RESPONSE

Because of the contention of some of the media that our campaign aims to encourage public confession, we have decided to print all Clean Slate stories anonymously.

"I received one of your promise leaflets at church. I wanted to let you know that I have signed the promise and my practical step is giving up smoking. After several attempts in the past and after more than 25 years of smoking, I have stopped. I am just completing my twelfth day... All I can say to those who have tried quitting and not succeeded is 'Don't stop giving up. You have only failed when you stop trying.'"

"My decision is to be totally true to my age, experience and background. To be totally open to new ideas without trying to appear 'with it' wiser or younger than I am."

"In my professional life, I have always had secretaries who patiently coped with my dictation and unbusinesslike office work. Now retired, I am Organiser of a Children's charity. Recently I realised I must go through dozens of letters we received in preparation for the AGM, somehow I imagined someone else would do it!! Painstakingly, I spent many hours going through and filing (somewhat inadequately) years of records.I had the inner satisfaction of a Clean Slate. Not only that, but valuable bits of information were discovered, previously overlooked with the pressure of past work."

"On the night that my husband died, I called on a neighbour to take me to the hospital. It was bad weather. As time passed on our journey, I felt more and more uneasy and, on arrival at the hospital grounds, asked if the neighbour could drop me off as we passed the entrance. I could not get out of the car as my neighbour insisted on parking first. This eventually took ten minutes. During those minutes, in the hospital, my husband died. I arrived just after this happened, only seconds really. I felt rather bitter at my neighbour (though I said nothing at the time) that I had not been there to say goodbye. Then I thought of Clean Slate and took it to God, and forgave my neighbour wholeheartedly. My attitude to him has changed completely and he knows he is forgiven. I feel better too and I know my husband understands."

"After many years of full-time Christian work, I have a mass of papers and books, some of them inherited. My instinct is to hold on to them till the time I can enjoy the leisure to go through them and extract important things to illustrate and justify my life work. My decision is to go through them all ruthlessly and keep only those items which will help the faith of the next generation. I have been delaying signing the CS promise until this process was further advanced, but in fact I have made a drastic start which has astonished my family!"

"When I read the Clean Slate Guide, I immediately thought of a huge walk-in cupboard. The sorting out of that cupboard presented me with something I just tried to forget. Over the following weeks, I tackled it – sorting, discarding, selling and sending to the jumble. Just as I was finishing, I heard of someone who wanted lodging for a week and it was just ready in time for her to have the room. And what a relief. Now I am free for more slate cleaning."

"Thanks for the leaflet. What a brilliant idea. I'm passing it on to several people, one in New Zealand. When the troubles of the world are so great, it is easy to feel that it is all beyond you. But here is something practical that everybody can do – the benefits are so great – it's not just the practical thing done, but the restoration or a step on the way to repairing or enhancing relationships which has the long-term effect."

"I have just experienced a 'change of heart' in which the words from the Lords Prayer 'forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us' had become a reality."

"In an evening of profound frustration and feeling my total inability to deal with my problems, I found myself asking God for forgiveness and help. These words, so unusual for me that I so very rarely ask for help – any help – addressed to 'someone, something out there', surprised me, but at the same time the thought occurred to me 'how can you ask for forgiveness when you are not able to give it?' In that moment I forgave a friend whom I had been unable to forgive till then. I called her immediately and just told her the news I felt the joy of freely sharing what I had freely received."

NEWS OF THE CAMPAIGN

"Thirty young people were happily 'clean slated' at a Global Club weekend in Cheshire from March 26-28. Inspired by the campaign the theme was, 'Approaching 2000 - a chance to re-think'. The honesty of those in the opening session helped all to go deep e.g. a PhD student shared how he had had to face up to and overcome an alcohol problem which was ruining his life, and another told of how being honest with her parents was one step on the road to recovery from eight years of anorexia. All focussed on the challenge: what could be different about my life and what practical steps can I take in 1999 to bring this about?" (Laura Trevelyan)

Brighton and Hove Interfaith Contact Group (IFCG) at its Annual General Meeting held on 21 February formally adopted the resolution to support Clean Slate Campaign. All mosques, churches and synagogues have been requested to introduce the campaign to their congregation. The Interfaith Network Southern Counties Link Meeting held on 24 March received the Clean Slate Guide. All present were encouraged to support the campaign.

The Annual General Meeting of the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRAES) held on Monday 29 March adopted a special resolution to recommend the Clean Slate Guide to all SACRAES throughout the country.

One of our patrons, David Bell, Director of Education for Newcastle City Council, has sent the Guide with a letter of recommendation to all the Chief Education Officers in the country. Already, in just over a week, we have had

UPDATE ON FINANCES

We have heard from the Charity Commission that the Clean Slate Campaign's application for charitable status had not been accepted. Apparently this is because the campaign does not prescribe how people should clean their slate, and thus cannot be classed as a campaign for "moral improvement". So, we are a not-for-profit company, but not a charity.

In practice, the main effect is that we can not receive tax refunds on Gift Aid contributions. But we are grateful to say that MRA and YWAM, which are charities, have both agreed to support the campaign by passing on Gift Aid contributions given for the Clean Slate Campaign. Cheques for this purpose should be paid either to "Youth With A Mission" or to "Moral Re-Armament", and sent to us at the Clean Slate Campaign.

Despite rising expenditure and a disappointing response from one Foundation in which we had high hopes, the Campaign's income has kept ahead of expenses, so that at the time of writing we have approximately £2,000 in hand. Since the last newsletter, three contributions of £1,000 have been given. For them, and for each gift large or small, we are extremely grateful.

We are continually seeking fresh sources of funds, and would be keen to know if you have ideas or suggestions. But so far, apart from some start-up finance from the three organisations behind it, money for the Clean Slate Campaign has come entirely from the contributions of individuals who believe in it and have send gifts, large or small. And it is all the stronger for that.

seven education authorities ask us for a total of 1,175 Guides to send to schools in their areas. One education officer wrote: 'We think that schools may well take your campaign up. Every success.'

A Press Release from the Board of Deputies of British Jews included: "The aim of the Campaign is to encourage people of all faiths, or none, to take some individual action or decision which will put right a past wrong." The Board's Director General commented, "All that the campaign asks is that each one of us should make some tangible contribution to our society by admitting or apologising for some wrong that we have done, whether big or small. By helping clean our own slate, each of us can together make the world a better place."

All delegates to the forthcoming Church of Scotland General Assembly in Edinburgh will receive a copy of the Guide in their pigeon holes. The Principal Clerk has requested 1,000 copies. A Church of Scotland minister in Caste Douglas, who received the Guide from someone in his area, wrote: "At last I have a scheme I can recommend to my congregation with enthusiasm and conviction."

Gerald Henderson writes from Liverpool: "Our vicar had my wife speak for five minutes on the CSC at the beginning of the main morning service followed by prayers of penitence. He got us to stand at the door at the end to hand out the Guide to everyone, about 200. One person commented that she already knew what she should do. The vicar has asked us to keep the supplies at the back of the church stocked up."