

# WORLD GOODWILL

## NEWSLETTER

A quarterly bulletin combining comment and information on world affairs with details of the work and programme of World Goodwill

1991, No. 1

### GOODWILL IN ACTION

featuring the Right Livelihood Award  
and the World Summit for Children

*Right livelihood is work that engages the heart as well as the mind  
and the body, work that develops selfhood, fosters companionship,  
and nourishes the earth.*

Robert Schwarz

In all its programmes and activities World Goodwill seeks to foster the energy of goodwill. For this reason we take every possible opportunity to draw attention to initiatives that are helping to meet real need.

Surely one of the greatest achievements of humanity in this extraordinary century is our creative expression of the will-to-serve. Everywhere people are getting together to help solve problems in their communities and to make their contribution to the betterment of life more effective. The vision of more compassionate and ethical relationships is everywhere inspiring the formation of groups of people of concern, ranging all the way from small groups working in the local environment to influential, international, service organisations spearheading world renewal.

As public awareness of the existence and scope of this global goodwill movement increases so, too, does confidence in the future of humanity, for here we see the practical expression of its higher potential. Here we see demonstrated humanity's capacity to be caring, to be visionary and to triumph over selfishness. Public support is so often a key factor in securing the success of a visionary project, and that support depends first of all upon people being aware of it and of the need it seeks to meet.

In this issue of the Newsletter we feature the 'alternative Nobel prize' — the Right Livelihood Award — and the way it promotes awareness of the forces of goodwill in the world. The Award honours pioneers who strive for peace, for human rights and social justice, for sustainable economic development and for environmental regeneration.

The prestige carried by the Award greatly strengthens the hands of those on whom it is conferred. For example, Orlando Gaitan, President of the Colombian Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare, said that winning the award in 1990 "brings us out of that invisibility under which communities like ours have been kept for so many years, suffering the effects of violence and underdevelopment, not having the opportunity to show to the world the kind of projects that we are able to develop". The collective message of the initiatives the Award has honoured over the years has been described as "one of hope and reassurance".

An important purpose of the Award is to spread the realisation that "today's problems are not insoluble, nor is their solution beyond the resources of individuals and small groups of people acting locally and collectively, mobilising the energies and talent of others and working for the common good". This is the very realisation which lies at the heart of the vision inspiring the work of World Goodwill.

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The Award highlights right livelihood as an essential factor in the creation of a better world. Right livelihood suggests a way of conducting your life that is right for you and right for your environment. And it involves the exercise of inclusive imagination because it calls for the ability to identify with the needs of others.

The right to work and the right to a living wage have now been established as an ideal, even if there is still a long way to go before they are established in practice. But these rights can be seen as minimum requirements for leading a worthwhile life. Beyond them lies a view of work as enriching for the individual.

The concept of right livelihood carries with it an inbuilt obligation to conduct your life in such a way that the quality of life in your environment is not impaired by your activity, but rather improved. This involves a view of work as service. It will mean doing work well and becoming more aware of the effects of any piece of work on the physical, emotional or spiritual environment. Just as some countries, most notably Sweden, are looking seriously for ways to include negative ecological effects on the debit side in estimating the Gross National Product, so it is possible to imagine all forms of livelihood being assessed in the future in terms of their impact both on the local and global environments. This type of assessment is already being made by those scientists and technicians who are abandoning often lucrative positions in military research for livelihoods that are regarded as 'right' in the sense of being life-promoting.

The Lord Buddha taught right livelihood as one of the requirements of the Noble Eightfold Path. Work was to give people the opportunity to use and develop their faculties, to overcome ego-centredness by co-operating with others, and to produce goods and services of value to the community. The economist, E. F. Schumacher, wrote of the insight Buddhist economics gives on the dilemma of modern society. The way ahead, he wrote, is "not a question of choosing between 'modern growth' and 'traditional stagnation'. It is a question of finding the right path of development, the Middle Way between materialistic heedlessness and traditionalistic immobility, in short, of finding 'Right Livelihood'."

In today's world so many are unable to find work, and so much work that is on offer falls far short of meeting the minimum requirements of right livelihood. Yet it is an ideal that grows in potency day by day and is increasingly influencing our view of the future.

"A clear vision establishes an inner reality. Before the cathedral comes the vision of the cathedral", says the author, Guy Dauncey. Today millions of people are visioning a better way of living and consciously shaping their lives so as to help in the creation of a society where right livelihood is recognised as fundamental. The recipients honoured by the Right Livelihood Award are examples of such practical vision.

In this issue of the Newsletter we also feature a most important event which directs attention to our great responsibility for shaping the future — the World Summit for Children. This historic gathering was held in the United Nations headquarters in New York in September 1990.

The idealistic views expressed by world leaders at the Summit show that the justice of claims to give highest priority to the needs of children has been recognized. However, there is need for the will to act upon that recognition, to ensure, through goodwill, that the vision captured at the summit is expressed in positive programmes that will transform the future for the world's children.

*Goodwill is [humanity's] first attempt to express the love of God. Its results on earth will be peace. It is so simple and practical that people fail to appreciate its potency or its scientific and dynamic effect. One person sincerely practicing goodwill in a family can completely change its attitudes. Goodwill really practiced among groups in any nation, by political and religious parties in any nation and among the nations of the world can revolutionize the world.*

Alice A. Bailey

# I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING TO HELP THE WORLD SITUATION

## Jakob von Uexkull talks to World Goodwill

When his offer to contribute towards the setting up of a new prize for environmental projects was turned down by the Nobel Foundation, Swedish stamp dealer Jakob von Uexkull decided that he would set up an alternative Nobel Prize, the Right Livelihood Award. He sold a collection of stamps and in 1980 the Award was established on the proceeds. Since then the Right Livelihood Award has become one of the world's most prestigious awards, having an especially high level of credibility in Germany, Scandinavia and parts of the Third World.

Last year World Goodwill spoke to Jakob von Uexkull. We began by asking what had inspired him to set up the Award.

**JvU** I've always felt that there is a purpose in life. My grandfather was a biologist who was very critical of Darwinism. I remember my father once told me that my grandfather had said to him, "In nature there are no waste paper baskets, everything fits together". I'd felt for a long time that I wanted to do something to help the world situation. I was increasingly aware of the four major crises threatening the future: the crisis of the destruction of the environment, the danger of nuclear war, the increasing material misery and destruction in many countries in the Third World and, lastly, what I call the crisis of meaning — the increasing spiritual poverty in the materially rich countries.

I thought of editing and publishing a magazine informing people about these crises but I found there were enormous numbers of magazines already, giving all the information that you could ever read. I thought about writing a book and realised that all the books I thought needed to be written existed already.

Throughout the 1970s I travelled around the world to attend huge regional conferences on such crises as human habitation, population and food etc. And I realised that at all these conferences there were also parallel "alternative" conferences where non-governmental groups were meeting. They were very much on the margin. I realised that these alternative movements and organisations were not getting the recognition they deserved. I felt it wasn't really very helpful for them to try and join the mainstream because the mainstream is built up in such a way as to block alternative initiatives. On the other hand it wasn't very helpful to sit out there trying to create the alternative without reference to what goes on in the mainstream because, as we know, the nuclear radiation cloud from Chernobyl didn't stop in front of the "alternative communities". In fact the people who tried to live off the land in Sweden, where I was born, were those who were most poisoned by the pollution from Chernobyl.

The solution seemed to be to create what I call an "alternative mainstream". This was to give the people in the non-governmental organisations who are working on the solutions recognition, prestige and support so that they would be taken seriously.

Being Swedish my first step was to write to the Nobel Foundation suggesting an award specifically for environmental projects. But the Nobel Foundation director wrote that they had decided not to have more Nobel awards.

So I thought "If they're not interested I will take the resources I have, set the award at maximum levels to have some impact and go to Stockholm and present the awards the day before the Nobel prizes and see what the reaction is."

The first year, 1980, we received very good publicity. A Swedish member of parliament heard about our award and arranged for the recipients to have dinner in parliament. The next year she organised a formal dinner there with other MPs. That support grew and now the awards are presented in the Swedish parliament each year.

We have received donations from around the world that have enabled us to increase the awards. The first year we shared \$50,000 between two projects. Last year \$120,000 was shared between three projects. A fund has been set up for the ongoing support of past recipients' work. We will be using this fund to finance a one week's working conference of all our recipients to celebrate the first 10 years of the award.

**WG** What is it the jury looks for in deciding who should receive the award?

**JvU** The recipients are chosen by an international jury which works by consensus and anybody can nominate anybody except themselves. First of all we look for projects which are at the stage where they have done a lot with no, or very little, support — and where a little more support would make a big difference. We look at projects which are at the stage where others can come in and learn from them and where they are ready to share their experiences. We also look for projects with an inspirational quality. For example, someone in a quite different area could look at this project and think "I've been waiting for the experts or someone else to solve this particular problem. But here are these people, possibly in a much worse situation than I, and they just went out and did it. So maybe I should go ahead and start work on my idea."

Alfred Nobel said that he wanted to award those who have conferred the greatest benefit upon mankind. What we are saying is the priorities are now wrong; they have changed over the past eighty/ninety years. We now need different role models. We are awarding work which is practical, which is repeatable and which is dealing with the most urgent crises facing the world today. Of course we can't cover every crisis every year, but if you look at the list of the recipients over the years, you will see that they present a whole different way of doing things and a way which works. The word 'alternative' can be a misnomer because in many areas there is no alternative to the alternative unless you want to continue straight along the road to catastrophe.

**WG** The award is now very prestigious.

**JvU** Yes, because of the enormous publicity given to it. The fact that the award is presented in the Swedish parliament is also a great benefit. In the Third World it's quite clear that the Right Livelihood Award is seen as more relevant and more prestigious than the Nobel Prize because it deals with the concerns of the people.

It often happens that from being virtually unrecognised or even persecuted winners of the award return home to find their situation transformed. I remember saying at the award presentation in 1989 that one sign of success will be when politicians in trouble turn to Right Livelihood recipients for advice. Since then we have had one of our laureates appointed the Environmental Minister in Brazil, another as advisor to the President of Chile. Two recipients have been appointed advisors to the government of India and a member of our jury and board is the new Minister of Environment in the state of Lower Saxony in West Germany.

**WG** Why did you choose this name for the Award?

**JvU** To me right livelihood means living rightly on the earth, not taking more than our fair share of the earth's

resources. It's a title that makes people think. People come to me and say, "by this name — right livelihood — you are implying that other people are engaged in wrong livelihood". And that is true. There are masses of people working in wrong livelihoods, more than in right livelihoods. That makes people think.

The four crises I mentioned at the beginning are so serious and new impulses are needed to solve them. I can't see anything more important than identifying and helping these impulses. That is what we are doing in our award, and through our focus on right livelihood.

**Right Livelihood Award, P.O. Box 15072, S-10465 Stockholm, Sweden.**

The acceptance speeches of award winners are available in two books published by Green Books, Ford House, Hartland, Bideford, Devon EX39 3EE, UK.

**People & Planet: The Right Livelihood Awards 1980-85.** Edited by Tom Woodhouse. Green Books.

**Replenishing the Earth: The Right Livelihood Awards 1986-89.** Edited by Tom Woodhouse. Green Books.

## THE RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AWARDS 1989-90

### PUTTING VISION, IDEAS AND INSPIRATION INTO PRACTICE

In the last two years eight groups or individuals have been honoured with Right Livelihood Awards.

In 1989 the \$120,000 cash award was shared between Dr. Melaku Worede (an Ethiopian geneticist), working on the conservation of plant species, Survival International and Drs. Aklilu Lemma and Legesse Wolde-Yohannes (Ethiopian scientist who pioneered a molluscicide for the prevention of bilharzia). An Honorary Award went to the Japanese women's association, Seikatsu Club Consumers' Co-operative.

In 1990 the cash award went to peasant leader Bernard Lédéa Ouedraogo from Burkina Faso, Israeli human rights lawyer Felicia Langer and the Colombian agricultural workers' organisation Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare. An Honorary Award went to Alice Tepper Marlin, founder of the Council on Economic Priorities in New York.

In this issue of the Newsletter we report on three of the 1990 award winners. A report on the work of Bernard Lédéa Ouedraogo will be included in the next Newsletter. We also feature two of the winners in 1989 (one of the 1989 recipients, Survival International, was featured in the last Newsletter).

### WORLD RECOGNITION FOR ETHIOPIAN SCIENTISTS

In 1989 the Right Livelihood Award focused world attention on the work of two Ethiopian scientists, Drs. Aklilu Lemma and Legesse Wolde-Yohannes, and their struggle to win international recognition and support for their discovery of a cheap community-based prevention for one of the Third World's worst diseases, bilharzia (schistosomiasis).

In the past two decades, as we all know, Ethiopia has been torn apart by revolution and civil war, and devastated by the worst series of famines in recent history. Yet despite all this, indeed spurred on by it, the quiet, behind-the-scenes work of these scientists has continued.

Bilharzia is a disease that affects over 200 million people, mostly in the Third World. Untreated it can be fatal. It is caused when someone becomes infested with small worms in the liver and bloodstream. The carriers for these worms are several varieties of freshwater snail which release enormous numbers of larvae into the water. The larvae burrow through the skin and infect people who swim or wash in the contaminated water.

The work of Drs. Lemma and Wolde-Yohannes began with a chance discovery some twenty-five years ago. For centuries people have used the berries of the endod

plant or "soapberry" as a soap to wash their clothes. Dr. Lemma noticed a large number of dead water snails downstream from where women were doing their washing. He discovered it was the juice from the endod plant that was killing the snails. In 1966 he established the Institute of Pathobiology in Addis Ababa University, and for the next ten years directed team research into endod as a molluscicide. In 1974 he was joined by Dr. Wolde-Yohannes, a trained horticulturist, who was able to discover the active molluscicide. Initial tests showed that only 10-20 parts per million were enough to kill all the important disease-transmitting snails. Field trials lasting five years produced an

overall reduction of the disease from 60% to 33%. But in children aged 1-5 there was a dramatic reduction of 87%. At the beginning of the trial 50% of the children involved were infected, but at the end this had been reduced to less than 7%. At the award ceremony Dr. Lemma commented that they were able to deduce from these figures that all the newly-born had been protected as a result of the trial. "It is community self-help at its best", he said.

This discovery offers a cheap, locally produced means of helping to eradicate a disease that is the second greatest scourge (after malaria) in the Third World. In Dr.

Wolde-Yohannes' view, "very often it is overlooked that the solution to the poor man's problem is close at hand to the poor man". Yet progress in making this molluscicide available to the people who so desperately need it has been tragically slow. The reasons for this lie in some of the least attractive biases and institutional failings of the international medical community. These include a general disparagement of research projects in the Third World and the impossibility of mobilising commercial funds to develop a product that is intended to be widely available to, and under the control of, poor people.

In the last few years, however, the persistence of these two Ethiopian scientists has produced some progress towards overcoming these problems. But the stark reality is that in order for Third World research to benefit Third World people not only are the usual scientific skills required, but also a stubborn refusal to give up in the face of international scientific prejudice that seeks to ignore the validity of this research.

In accepting the Right Livelihood Award Dr. Lemma commented that he was receiving it "on behalf of all Third World scientists, who need this kind of encouragement".

## THE JAPANESE WOMEN WHO ARE CREATING AN ECONOMY OF CO-OPERATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

### Seikatsu Club Consumers Co-operative

"The most successful model of production and consumption in the industrialised world, aiming to change society by promoting self-managed and less wasteful lifestyles." These words were used by the jury of the Right Livelihood Award to describe Seikatsu Club Consumers Co-operative (SCCC), a women's co-operative in Japan that has "created an alternative economy based on principles of co-operation, human contact and ecological sustainability".

Today some 170,000 families participate in SCCC, a far cry from its origin in 1965 when a Tokyo housewife organised 200 women to buy 300 bottles of milk to reduce the price. Since then, SCCC has grown into a significant business enterprise, with a turnover in 1987 of 41 billion yen.

The Co-operative operates through a network of small groups or "hans". Each han includes 6-13 families and is represented by a democratically elected leader at branch level. Branches of between 50 and 100 hans are free to develop their own agenda and activities. They, in turn, send representatives to the General Assembly to make policy and elect the SCCC's Board of Directors. 80% of Board members are women.

Business is centred upon the distribution of 400 different products to the hans. Sixty of these are original brands and, by value, 60% are primary products such as rice, milk, chicken, eggs, fish and vegetables. Through a unique computer-operated advance ordering system, producers plan in advance the produce required, so ensuring its freshness.

There is great awareness of environmental concern within the Co-operative. SCCC does not handle products harmful to members' health or to the environment. "Synthetic

detergents, artificial seasoning and clothing made with fluorescents are all off limits, even if members make demands for them." Where particular products are not available, SCCC has organised its own production. It currently owns two organic milk factories and manufactures several varieties of soap, including one from recycled cooking oil.

SCCC has an agreement with an organic agriculture co-operative which now supplies over 30% of the SCCC's total purchases. Direct purchase from the producer encourages consumer/producer co-operation and awareness. SCCC also arranges an annual excursion to Shounai to help in this process. In return for asking farmers to use organic fertilisers and fewer chemicals, members buy a contracted amount of produce and agree to overlook any physical imperfections there may be. Also members may help with the harvest if their labour is needed.

The Seikatsu Club has shown in several ways how it can adapt to changes in Japanese society. With the growth of the female labour force in Japan, the voluntary nature of the housewife-based hans came under stress. In response SCCC set up women's collectives to undertake distribution and other service enterprises. These include recycling, food preparation, child-minding etc. By December 1987, SCCC had 57 such collectives giving employment to 1550 SCCC members. In Japanese society, most women's jobs are unskilled and part-time. The collectives offer housewives an opportunity to work to their full potential. By managing their own businesses, members not only reap greater job satisfaction, they are also able to make a constructive contribution to their own communities.

Political involvement has grown out of SCCC activities. Campaigns against synthetic detergents showed members the importance of the political process. Independent networks have been formed to contest local elections. In 1979, the first Network member was elected to Tokyo City government and there are now 33 councillors in Chiba, Tokyo and Yokohama, all of them women. There are 22 such networks. Their manifestos are environment and peace-oriented with an emphasis on local participatory economic and political democracy, and on equal status for women. Members have campaigned under such slogans as "Political Reform from the Kitchen" and "Woman Democracy: Peace, Life, Future, Nature, Earth".

SCCC has more recently launched a campaign: "From Collective Buying to All of Life". Through this campaign it is planning to contact every household in Japan with the aim of recruiting from at least 10% of them.

The simple yet profound philosophy of the Seikatsu Club is summarised in a Kanagawa Network publication: "Reflecting on the everyday activities in our lives and the raising of our children, we have often confronted the simple fact, 'There is something wrong ...'. We are forced to live a life that is commercialised, controlled and suppressed. In this world where materials prevail, we seek to create an alternative community, filled with the spontaneity and creativity of independent and free individuals."

**Seikatsu Club Consumers' Co-operative,  
2-26-17 Miyasaka, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo,  
JAPAN.**

## **"NOT ONE MORE PEASANT IS TO BE KILLED"**

### **Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare**

For thirteen years, from 1974 to 1987, the 3,000 peasant families living in the Carare region of Colombia found themselves in the middle of a war between three rival armies. They lived with the constant fear of being killed or tortured. By 1987 over 500 peasants had been killed. It seemed that there was nothing that they could do to find peace and security other than to leave their homes and their sources of livelihood.

Orlando Gaitan, who has recently been elected president of the peasants' association, ATCC, told World Goodwill about the background to the violence. "The guerillas first came to the region about 20 years ago. They worked well with the peasants and they became, basically, the government of the region." It wasn't long, however, before the situation began to change. The guerillas lost the peasants' support when they began to interfere in the way the peasants lived their lives. At the same time the Colombian Army moved into the region in an effort to establish government control. The people were caught in the midst of a two-way battle. "The guerillas would be after the peasants, accusing them of supporting the army, and the army would be after the peasants saying they were supporters of the guerillas." The situation became worse when the paramilitaries became involved. They "started killing peasants all around, because they accused them of supporting the guerillas".

"The peasants were faced with four alternatives: one was to join the guerillas, the

second was to join the army, the third was to leave the region, and the fourth one was to die." One remarkable group of peasants, however, saw that there was a fifth option, and that if they worked together they could act themselves to bring peace and development to the region. They formed the Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare (ATCC), using as their slogan "the right to life, peace and work".

The story of the way in which ATCC has brought a relative measure of peace and hope to the region is a remarkable tale of courage, initiative and self-reliance. Fifty peasants formed a committee and asked the guerilla commanders to meet with them. As Orlando Gaitan explained, "the guerillas came with the agenda for the meeting, and they told us 'we are the ones who are the leaders here, and you are the ones who obey'. But the peasants said 'no, that was the case until today, but after today we are going to impose the conditions, and our conditions are: first, not one more peasant killed by the guerillas; second, no more services such as providing food, transport, etc. from the peasants to the guerillas; third, no more visits from the guerillas to the peasants' houses, and no more political links or meetings'".

The peasants' demands were accepted and, at a second meeting with the guerillas two thousand peasants turned up in support of the Asociación. They agreed with the guerillas that the same conditions should be demanded from the army and the

paramilitary groups, and again they were successful. Over 5,000 peasants attended the meeting with the Army and, in August 1987, 8,000 turned up in support of a peace rally.

ATCC's success in bringing peace to the region has been remarkable. Between May 1987 and February 1990, at a time when violence reached unprecedented heights in the country as a whole, there were only five killings in the Carare region. The situation is still volatile, however, and earlier in the year four of the ATCC's leading activists were gunned down in a restaurant in their hometown. Immediately the Asociación elected new officials and began further dialogue with the armed groups.

Since the peace initiatives in 1987, ATCC has become the prime vehicle for development in the region. Their Development Plan has won the backing of the government, attracting loans for rural development projects and grants for road improvements, water supply and other programmes. The Asociación also has a strong environment policy. It has petitioned the government environmental agency to declare three important local forest areas inviolate forest reserves; it sought to limit hunting and fishing in the region; it is working with a French biologist on reforestation using indigenous, potentially income-generating trees, and it is just starting a most promising collaboration on ecological education with the New School Programme of Colombia (reported in World Goodwill Newsletter 1990, No. 2).

## **SHOPPING FOR A BETTER WORLD**

### **Council On Economic Priorities**

Every year the jury of the Right Livelihood Award makes an honorary award in addition to the various cash awards. In 1990 the honorary prize went to American economist Alice Tepper Marlin and the research organisation which she founded in 1968, the Council on Economic Priorities (CEP).

CEP's work is now enormously influential in the U.S.A. The Council provides the facts and figures that are needed to enable people to exert pressure on big business and the large institutions that dominate the American economy.

The CEP is perhaps best known for its work on corporate responsibility. For twenty-one years it has evaluated companies according to social and ethical criteria "just as rigorously as their financial performance". Companies have been investigated to determine their policies on such matters as

pollution; equal opportunities for women; employment of minorities. Every year CEP presents the prestigious Corporate Conscience Awards to companies with outstanding records in moral responsibility. In 1986 the influential *Rating America's Corporate Conscience* was published. This was followed in 1988 by a consumer guide, *Shopping For A Better World*, which rated the social responsibility of companies that produce nearly 2,000 different brand-name products. The guide became a best-seller. Over 800,000 copies have been sold and CEP research has shown that 80% of the people who purchased it have subsequently changed the products they buy.

As well as listing the enormous problems America faces, Alice Tepper Marlin cited some of the reasons for her "cautious optimism". Some companies, she said, "are installing first-rate pollution control equipment, eliminating hazardous

ingredients and turning to sustainable agriculture . . . 70% of America's one thousand largest industrial companies now have at least one woman on their board of directors, compared with only 3% when I graduated from university. A few have set up childcare programmes, elder care programmes and offered assistance to their employees to pay for care of dependent relatives or have adopted local schools".

"When the Council started twenty-one years ago, very few companies were aware of their impact on society and very few citizens felt able to do anything about it. Today, we have begun to mobilise consumer and investor power for positive social and economic changes — one purchase and one letter and one demonstration at a time.

**The Council on Economic Priorities, 30 Irving Place, New York, New York 10003, USA.**

## I WANT TO SHAKE AND TO SHOCK

### Felicia Langer

From time to time Right Livelihood Awards are given to individuals who have, in the eyes of the jury, made an outstanding contribution to the struggle for human rights.

In 1990 Israel's foremost human rights lawyer, Felicia Langer, was honoured with an Award that, as the jury stated, recognised "the exemplary courage of her struggle for basic human rights under very difficult circumstances".

Felicia Langer, a Jew, came to Israel from Poland in 1950 with her husband, a survivor of five concentration camps. After the Six

Days' War in 1968 she moved her legal practice to West Jerusalem and began her work of defending Palestinians in the Israeli military courts and working for an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank. She suffered abuse from her fellow Israelis as a result of this work and one lawyer has commented that she is unique in continuing to defend Palestinians in the military courts for over two decades. The strain is such that few advocates are able to do this work for more than three years. As Vice-President of Israel's League for Human and Civil Rights, Felicia Langer has said,

"only because of my strong feelings for my country am I doing what I can to save its soul. Because we (Jews) know what it is to suffer, we must not oppress others".

Speaking at a Right Livelihood meeting, she said that for 22 years her work has been "to shake and to shock. Sometimes I feel that the indifference is so deep that you cannot shake it — and I wonder how many massacres we need, how much blood we need to shed, in order to open the eyes of the world and to break this terrible cycle of violence in the Middle East".

## MOVING TOWARDS A GLOBAL ETHIC

### The World Summit for Children

*The future of the race lies in the hands of the young people everywhere. What we do with them and for them is momentous in its implications; our responsibility is great and our opportunity unique.*

Alice A. Bailey

"We have gathered at the World Summit for Children to undertake a joint commitment and to make an urgent universal appeal — to give every child a better future.

The children of the world are innocent, vulnerable, and dependent. They are also curious, active and full of hope. Their time should be one of joy and peace, of playing, learning and growing. Their future should be shaped in harmony and co-operation. Their lives should mature, as they broaden their perspectives and gain new experience. But for many children, the reality of childhood is altogether different."

Thus reads the World Declaration on Children, a five-page declaration focusing on the survival, protection, and development of children. This declaration, along with a Plan of Action for implementing it by the year 2000, were both unanimously adopted at the World Summit on September 30, 1990.

Initiated by six countries (Canada, Egypt, Mali, Norway, Pakistan, and Sweden), the Summit was an epic event. It was the largest meeting of heads of state ever. Over 70 world leaders — prime ministers, kings and presidents — came together to concentrate on one issue and on one issue only: the plight of the world's children.

The Summit meeting transformed the United Nations. In keeping with the theme, children were everywhere, many in national dress. It was the first time that children were officially part of several delegations seated in the General Assembly hall while the choir of the United Nations provided the arriving leaders with folk songs.

The purpose of the World Summit was to promote commitment, at the highest political level, to goals and strategies for ensuring the survival, protection and development of children as key elements in the socio-economic development of all countries and human society.

The Summit also sought to bring attention to the Convention on the Rights of the Child — the "Magna Carta" or Bill of Rights for children, currently signed by 128 countries and ratified by 49.

At the heart of the World Summit was the principle of "First Call" for children. This means that the growing minds and bodies of children should have first call on society's resources, and that children should be able to depend upon that commitment in good times and in bad. Peter Adamson, editor of UNICEF's *The State of the World's Children*, put it this way in a conference document: "Whether a child survives or not, whether a child is well nourished or not, whether a child is immunized or not, whether a child goes to school or not, should not have to depend on whether interest rates rise or fall, on whether commodity prices go up or down, on whether a particular political party is in power, or whether the economy has been well managed, or whether a country is at war or not, nor on any other trough or crest in the endless undulations of political and economic life in the modern nation state."

The principle of "First Call" is universally relevant, applying equally to developing and industrialized countries. In the poorest parts of the world, cuts in government spending and falling family incomes have meant that infant mortality has risen, malnutrition has increased, and schools and health clinics have been closed. The result is that the poorest and most vulnerable children have been the most exposed to the repercussions of debt and recession — the exact opposite of the principle of "First Call." In the industrialized countries, the U.S.A. and the U.K., for example, the number of homeless families has doubled over the last decade despite steady economic growth, with the number of children living in poverty rising, in the U.S.A., by more than three million (from 11% of the child population in 1979 to over 15% today).

This principle of "First Call" is an attempt to protect children, as far as possible, from the mistakes, excesses and vicissitudes of the adult world. Each day countless children around the world suffer as casualties of war and violence; as victims of racial discrimination, apartheid, aggression, foreign occupation and annexation; as refugees and displaced children forced to abandon their homes and their roots; as victims of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. Each day, millions of children suffer from the scourges of poverty and economic crisis — from hunger and homelessness, from epidemics, illiteracy, and from degradation of the environment. Each day, 40,000 children die from malnutrition and disease, from lack of clean water and inadequate sanitation, and from the effects of drug abuse.

In response to this gruesome state of affairs, the Declaration of the World Summit for Children pledged the participating nations to work together in an effort to save the lives of at least a third of the 14 million infants who now die each year before the age of five. The Summit leaders also agreed to seek to reduce malnutrition in children by half by the year 2000; to reduce the number of women dying in childbirth, and provide clean water and primary education for all.

Peter Adamson states that the causes of over half of all child deaths and over half of all malnutrition in children in the 90s can be counted on the five fingers of one hand — dehydration (caused by diarrhoea), pneumonia, measles, tetanus and whooping cough. Low-cost vaccines, oral rehydration therapy and antibiotics could prevent most of this quiet carnage. These vaccines cost less than U.S.\$1.50 per fully immunized child. The packets of oral rehydration salts cost approximately U.S. \$1.00, and even the age-old

scourge of malnutrition has now been shown to be susceptible to drastic reduction at a financial cost of less than U.S. \$10 per child per year.

Adamson goes on to say that "to put the problem into an overall perspective, the additional costs, including delivery, of a programme to prevent the great majority of child deaths and child malnutrition in the decade ahead might reach approximately U.S. \$2.5 billion per year by the late 1990s".

"\$2.5 billion is a substantial sum," he says, "it is 1% of the poor world's own arms spending. It is as much as the Soviet Union has been spending on vodka each month. It is as much as U.S. companies have been spending each year to advertise cigarettes. It is 10% of the European Economic Community's annual subsidy to its farmers. It is as much as the world spends on the military every day."

Many, supporting the work of the Summit, are agreed that, however difficult the economic climate of the decade ahead, it is impossible to accept for one moment the notion that the world cannot afford to prevent the deaths and the malnutrition of so many millions of its young children.

The major obstacles, however, are not lack of finances or lack of technology or even outreach capacity. The major obstacles are not having the awareness that the job *can* be done and not having the determination to mobilize all possible resources to *do* it.

Whether the Summit can be judged as successful or not remains to be seen. The verdict lies in the hands of each one of us. We have the opportunity to provide a permanent gift from the last decade of the 20th century to the people of the new century. The Summit did not mark the end of a process, but rather, a new beginning.

#### Comments from the Summit:

Resources always seem to be scarce. The "peace dividend" many expected from the end of the Cold War has already been diluted by aggression in the Persian Gulf. Once again, the neediest children have lost — in large measure because so few voices among the powerful have spoken out strongly on their behalf.

Today may represent the beginning of a change in the lives of the world's children. Today, in this hall, they may finally have found the voices and the friends they have long been seeking. With all the demands on governments to fund worthwhile activities, there will never be enough money to do everything and priorities will have to be established and difficult choices made. Funding is important but it is not, in the end, the decisive factor in the war on child suffering. Political will is.

**Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada**

How much evil has already been committed in the name of children! But I have also experienced something very different. I have even experienced it as recently as several months ago, a year ago. I have experienced the beautiful revolt of children against the lie that their parents had served, allegedly in the interest of those very children: our anti-totalitarian revolution was — at least in its beginnings — a children's revolution.

**Vaclav Havel, President of Czechoslovakia**

I consider (the World Summit) to be one of the most important in the international dialogue on ways to establish secure and civilized world order. Without having improved the situation of children, millions of whom are dying every year from starvation, poverty and diseases, mankind cannot be confident of its future.

**Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the USSR**

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