

## ANY SPARE BOOKS?

One of the best aspects for me of two months with the *Action for Life* team in India was the fellowship. I have usually spent time with older people or younger people looking to me for leadership. This time there were people of similar age and experience and struggles. I realise this must have been one of the binding factors in MRA in the past.

In the team are two brilliant young men - Sophiet Chat from Cambodia and Kofi Bassaw Quartey from Ghana. Both have already taken many initiatives in their own countries and are in search of spiritual books for their teams. They were very interested in the various old MRA books I spoke about and asked where they could get copies to take home. You may have books you'd be prepared to donate. If so, let me know. I will then work out the best means of sending them on. My address is: 25 *The Fairway*, New Moston, Manchester M40 3WS.

**Bhavesh Patel**

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**GREENCOAT FORUMS,**  
24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD (RSVP Tel: 020 7798 6000)  
*Light refreshments from 6.30pm, speakers: 7.15pm till 9pm*

### Wednesday, February 18

Laurence Cockcroft, Chairman of Transparency International in the UK, will speak on: *Corruption and development: a personal Odyssey*

### Tuesday, March 9

David Brewer, founder of Media Ideas, which supports new independent media in emerging democracies, will speak on *Building independent media in developing democracies*

### Tuesday, April 20

International Farmers Dialogue (a programme of Initiatives of Change) will host an evening on *Farming as if everyone mattered*

### Tuesday, May 11

Alexander and Natalia Pinchook will speak on *Helping Chernobyl's children*



## TO MAKE LEARNING ENJOYABLE

*Hilary Belden is delighted with the title of the Government's new strategy document for primary schools in the UK. So much so, that she borrowed from it for the title of her Greencoat Forum presentation on December 9 – **Excellence and enjoyment for all: goals for 21st Century Education.***

"To see the word *enjoyment* in an official education document really makes me happy," she said. "The secret is the combination of striving for excellence and at the same time being able to introduce the creativity that makes learning enjoyable. You can have vision, hope and an element of excitement as well as the driving up of skills. Despite the bad press it sometimes gets, primary education in the UK is a success story."

Hilary Belden's own background is in secondary education. She left her last job as Head of Glenthorne High School (a mixed comprehensive school of 1000 pupils) to take up her current post as Director of the Ealing Excellence in Cities Action Zone. "Basically the government said it would give us money if we could get teachers from different schools to work creatively in partnership with each other," she explained. She works with ten schools - a mix of primary and secondary - with an annual

budget of £250,000 over three years. She said that one of the most important divides for the partnerships to bridge is that between primary and secondary schools and their teachers. Here the goal is to produce better continuity for pupils who do well in primary school but can easily feel lost (and "begin to go backwards") on entering the larger and often more impersonal secondary school.

Hilary's passion to reach out to disadvantaged pupils came



**Hilary addressing a class on National Poetry Day 2003**

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This issue was edited by Mary Jones and Janet Paine with layout by Blair Cummock. Please send material for the February issue by January 28 to Ann Carpenter, Bourne Cottage, Mill Lane, Mere, Warminster, Wilts BA12 6DA. email: russell.ann@tiscali.co.uk

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across. She had introduced Writing Festivals, events for National Poetry Day, and story telling by professionals for students from Y4 to Y7. She had organised a script-writing competition for Y10 (15-year-old) pupils and then arranged for actors to perform some of the entries – much to the delight of the young authors.

She said that her vision is that every child be given hope and expectation, should succeed in literacy and numeracy, should be taught in decent conditions and should have plenty of adult support. Many children come from backgrounds of poverty but research suggests that, by the time they reach 16, the interest that their parents have taken or not taken in their education outweighs all other factors.

**Paul Williams**

### **HOPE IN THE CITIES DIALOGUE**

*How do I ask the right question to enable people to talk honestly with each other? How do I control how I feel inside when I am facilitating an honest conversation, and remain neutral? How do I concentrate on what and not who is right?*

These were all hopes and fears expressed as challenges by those who undertook six days' training on *How to Facilitate a Hope in the*

*Cities Dialogue* in Liverpool before Christmas. This was hosted by *Hope in the Cities* with venue and catering expenses donated by a member of the local community. Participants came from both the public and voluntary sectors.

As one who knew very little about Liverpool apart from a childhood Beatle experience, I was profoundly moved by the depth of feeling that poured out in our introductory meeting. How difficult it was either to be born in Liverpool, struggling to find respect and identity, or to come in from outside and feel accepted and integrated into community life.

We trained for one day each week. Our common desire to bring different sectors of Liverpool life together helped us to grow together and begin to understand each other. It was hard not to express our own opinion and even harder to stop ourselves from doing things which others find difficult, interrupting, pointing or showing we know better. We used times of silence as a means of focusing the group on the real "mission" of the dialogue and we learnt how to work together in pairs and encourage others to speak from the heart by using our own experience.

We laughed a lot and sometimes we cried, but at the end we

... by the suffering of your Son and by the innocence of our lives, frustrate all evil designs and establish your reign of justice and peace." No partial visions there. No demanding sacrifices from others in order to preserve our way of life. Leaving aside religious symbolism, we were asking God to help us so to live that his power could overcome evil and establish a just and peaceful world.

Worldly power also exists, and has to be used. We are not talking about a political platform here. But the prayer implies that the way each of us lives is what makes it possible for good to triumph. Does that not hold the seed of a vision which might affect the thinking and policies of people of faith globally?

**Chris Evans**

### **NEW LOOK FOR A CHANGE**

The Feb/March issue of *For A Change* will have an entirely new look. It has been redesigned by Hayden Russell from New Zealand, with input from Marianne Carpenter from Norway. Hayden, a freelance graphic designer, has joined us since the retirement of Philip Carr last year. Hayden says: "Working for FAC has given me a fascinating insight into the work of Initiatives of Change, which I

have tried to reflect in the redesign of the magazine."

The need for a redesign was highlighted by Fabiola Benavente in her market research among people in their 20s and 30s.

We have also moved the printing to a company in south-west London, saving at least £1,500 per year.

Janet Paine has written the lead story for the new issue, about ten years of *Foundations for Freedom*. Bob Webb profiles Douglas Johnston, and Dr Yaw Adu-Sarkodie is the guest columnist, on the AIDS crisis in Africa. Nigel Heywood files the first of his regular column as he travels with *Action for Life*.

With the new look we are also featuring a new "interactive" column – "Since you ask" – in which we invite readers to submit not more than 250 words on a set subject. The next topic will be: "What was my biggest mistake?" Deadline: February 9. We need lots of contributions to get this off the ground. So please write in.

Howard Grace has ordered 1,000 copies of the new issue to use with the IC Schools Service. We hope you will show the new-look magazine to your friends of all generations and encourage them to subscribe.

**Mary Lean, Ken Noble,  
Mike Smith**

## **A VISION TO INSPIRE**

*In a confused and polarised world, people everywhere find it easier to proclaim what and who they are against than what they are for. Much of the leadership on all sides reflects the feelings and anxieties of leaders and led alike. Few rise above these feelings to offer a positive vision around which millions the world over can rally and for which they will give their best.*

*The war of ideas rooted in the injustice and failures of the past exploded upon the world on 9/11. It has since given way to a war on terrorism, which unwittingly gives credence to a predicted clash of civilisations.*

*What is missing is a positive vision rooted in the shared values of the great civilisations and faiths caught up in the current clash. Could IC contribute to the search for a positive vision? Why not?*

This was part of a commentary offered last month by the IC International Council, under the heading *The War of Ideas*. We have since appreciated thoughtful responses from several people, including two in Britain who have taken issue with the headline as striking the wrong note, out of harmony with the vision we are seeking to offer. It is good to be in an active process of seeking for expressions which might

become widely used and help shape public understanding. This must be an open process, not restricted to any particular group.

### **Whose vision?**

Part of the difficulty is that, even when we speak positively, in terms of what we are for, our vision is still rooted in our own mindset. For example, I love the idea of liberal, democratic values. To me, they speak of personal freedom and responsibility, expressed in a political system and in human relationships. But I can see that elsewhere the same words might conjure a vision of poverty alongside societies soaking in luxury and decadence, maintained by military power.

If we continue to judge ourselves by our ideals, but others by how their deeds affect us, our vision will always be partial, with no ability to transcend differences.

### **The way we live**

Contrast this with a prayer that riveted my attention last week. It is a prayer for the Sunday after Christmas, used by millions of Anglican and Episcopalian Christians, including presumably many of the leaders of the war against terror: "Heavenly Father,

didn't want the learning process to finish. We have already planned our first real dialogue at Liverpool Hope University with students and the local community.

Many thanks go to all the participants, to Lawrence Fearon for his co-training and to Gerald and Judith Henderson for their overwhelming hospitality.

**Phoebe Gill**

## **AUSTRALIAN PILGRIMAGE**

Forty-five years ago, I went with my family to live at Armagh, the lovely Melbourne home given by Mr and Mrs Cecil McKay as a centre for MRA in the Pacific region. I lived there for over four years. Going back was a thrill. Led by the wise and warm-hearted host-ship of Rob and Cheryl Wood and Fetu Paulo (from Western Samoa), the house is now a lively community with some twelve young people, mainly Asian, studying or working in Melbourne. They are getting training and participating in all the IC activities there. It was moving to be present at breakfast when we all shared our thoughts for the day.

I was there on and off for five weeks as part of a three-month visit to Australia. My daughter Angela joined me for eight weeks.

I spent much time catching up with old friends and being in the homes of colleagues who are now carrying so much of the world-wide work of IC.

Thanks to an old friend of Dron's, who left us a legacy, we took the chance to go to Alice Springs and Uluru (Ayers Rock) and also to North Queensland, where we snorkelled on the Barrier Reef and saw something of the huge rain forests and crocodile-infested rivers of the region. We were in Sydney for the final of the Rugby Cup!

With Andrew Lancaster, I was received by the new Governor General (Major General Jeffrey) and his wife who were very interested to know about IC. My uncle was the wartime Governor General and I was shown around the garden at Government House, created by my aunt in memory of their only son who was killed in North Africa.

The journey was also a pilgrimage as I feel my way toward God's plan for my life following Dron's death. It was good to have the space to look freshly and honestly at the past and hopefully towards the future. The love poured out by so many friends, and God's love which I have felt so deeply over these past months, have helped me greatly on this pilgrimage.

**James Hore-Ruthven**

## IN THE WAKE OF BAM

In 1997 my wife Jean and I were in Bam for a day on a package tour. We wandered through the ancient fortress city that is a UNESCO heritage site. We looked down on the date groves and the modern town athwart a trunk road, where lorries rumble on their way to and from Pakistan.

Now Bam is a tomb for thirty thousand of its inhabitants, while homeless survivors shiver under the date palms. We all mourn, and even Iran's enemies have offered to help. The clerical leadership feels the same anguish of soul that afflicts us all. For a time the issue of nuclear capability is replaced in the world's headlines by the ordinary men and women of Iran in their grief.

Muslim and Christian theology come close at the point of death. We each believe in a God who leads through the perplexities of this world to an eternal life of perfect peace. If the dates are sweet here (and Bam's dates can be found in the markets of London) how much more delicious will be the fruit of Paradise. At a Muslim house of mourning, the word of comfort to the bereaved is "We belong to God and to him we are returning".

A Middle East student arriving in London asked his hosts, "We Muslims believe that the second coming of Jesus will mark the end

of the world. What do you Christians believe?"

Jean and I spent much of the first three years of our marriage among the ordinary people of Iran. Our first home was a single room above a fruit and veg shop alongside a main road in Tehran. A committee of Muslims had invited us to assist in their programme of MRA among students and in other areas of national life. Why us? We discovered they wanted to show that husband and wife can work together (we had yet to prove this to ourselves), that people of different faith can find common cause, and the good Lord is mighty enough to change the British.

### A need for change

In imperial days the British made a cable link to India that had to be guarded as it passed through Southern Persia. From the early 20th century we talked about "our oil" in the South West of the country. And both world wars, when Iran claimed neutrality, saw occupation by the Russians in the North and the British in the South. To this day any British person in Iran is likely to be thought of as an agent of their government.

We gradually won trust by our evident poverty. There was much need for change as we learned to work with our hosts. And it became known we had put off

starting a family out of a sense of God's call to this task.

Also invited at the time was a Swede called Antero Tikkanen, a person with no imperial baggage and a great gift of quiet friendship.

### A daily search

One of the people we worked with was head of public relations for the National Iranian Oil Company in the South. With the extreme heat of the Gulf, he got up at 5 o'clock and had his hour's quiet time walking in the cool of the morning, stopping from time to time to record his thoughts. He told us that a daily search for "what is right" in the light of absolute moral standards brought him peace of heart, and practical solutions to problems in the industry. He set up programmes for us to show films in the workers' clubs in the oil fields, and had one of the MRA books translated into Persian.

In terms of the nation's destiny, the work of our hosts and ourselves can be judged a failure. At the height of his power, the Shah repudiated MRA, which he had turned to for spiritual help in his hour of weakness. And the Revolution swept everything away, except Iranian human nature. As we discovered on our holiday, the Iranians' love of art, poetry and gardens is intact; a sense of humour is close to the

surface; and the old politeness steers them past new authorities as they go about their lives.

What we gained from our years of work there was an expansion of heart and mind, and an abiding affection for the country. In the wake of tragedy at Bam, might a new phase of God's plan emerge, where a new generation of Europeans and Iranians seize the moment to work out their common future? **Peter Everington**

## CYPRIT HONOURED

Neophytos Christodoulides, trade unionist and long-time associate of MRA/IC, has received a Commendation from Commander British Forces Cyprus, for 47 years of service to the army and air force.

"Mr Christodoulides' unrelenting sense of duty, willingness to help others and the attainment of the highest standards single him out for the highest praise," reads the Commendation.



**Neophytos Christodoulides receiving the Commendation**