

## FUTURE EVENTS

### **Tirley Garth Weekend, October 20-21**

#### **NATIONAL FORUM**

Dates chosen to coincide with half-term to make it easier for families to attend. A chance to look ahead to 2002. Dick Ruffin's talk 'Finding Shared Visions' and a new name for MRA will be on the agenda.

### **London – 24 Greencoat Place**

#### **GREENCOAT FORUMS**

**Tuesday, October 9,** 6.30 for 7.15pm:

Dr Geiko Muller-Fahrenheit, will be drawing on his reflections on Germany's post-war relations with neighbouring countries. He has written extensively on how forgiveness can transform relations between nations.

**Tuesday, November 13** (not Saturday as announced last month) 6.30 for 7.15 pm:

Robert Hynd, Scottish Corporate Lawyer, will talk on 'The Changing Scene – the new Scottish Parliament and constitutional change in the UK'. An entertaining speaker, Mr Hynd is well placed to interpret these developments.

#### **FRIENDS OF WESTMINSTER PRODUCTIONS**

**Saturday, November 3,** at 3.30 and 6.30 pm

Concert version of the 1950's musical *Jotham Valley*. Tickets: 020 7798 6000.

### **Leeds, October 10**

Dr. Muller-Fahrenheit will speak at the university, and at Liverpool, **October 11** in the Cathedral, followed by Coventry, **October 12**, at the university. Details from Peter Riddell: <p.riddell@mra.org.uk> or Tel: 01865 511 800

### **Aberdeen, November 3**

The International Communications Forum invited by the Christian Socialist Movement and Robert Gordon University will hold a one day forum 'The media and how it affects society'. It will be opened by the Lord Provost. A civic reception will be followed by a meeting at the university.

### **Edinburgh, November 6**

The ICF group will meet Napier University staff and students. There will be a public meeting in the evening. Leaflets from Finlay Moir: <finlay@fmoir.freemove.co.uk>

Tel: 0131 664 3490

**Michael Henderson** will lead a day of discussion on the power of forgiveness arranged by the Malvern Churches Justice and Peace Group on **October 20**. On **November 8** he will be guest speaker at Bradford University. Then at Cheltenham School on **November 9** and at Bedales School on **November 9**.

# **UK NEWSLETTER**

MRA, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD Tel: 020 7798 6000 [www.mra.org.uk](http://www.mra.org.uk)

Issue No 167

October 2001

## **MEMBERS OF ONE WORLD FAMILY**

*A message received on September 13 from more than twenty friends in the United States*

We want you to know that all closest friends here are safe. We thank you for your prayers and heartfelt expressions of concern. We join you in renewing our commitment to seeking God's way for the world. We pray for the many, many victims and their families. We pray for the right leadership in response to this tragedy. We have also on our hearts those, who in the public mind, may be associated with this tragedy. And we pray too for the souls of the perpetrators. We ask for your help and wisdom as members of one world family

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At a time of darkening crisis, the idea to hold on to is that the Almighty has a plan for his world, and a daily part for each of us. We are told in the Bible that "Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God, the creator of all light, and he shines for ever without change or shadow".

Crisis is a good time to make or remake a basic decision. The central event of one man's life came after his return from a devastating war in Asia: "I decided that so far as I could understand it, I would from that point only do what God told me to

do. The decision took a moment of time. With it I stepped into a new world." In three UK newspapers last week, obituaries of Dickie Dodds, soldier and cricketer, celebrated the fruits of that decision.\*

During the war in Burma, it was a British Colonel, David Watson, who, by his attractive lifestyle helped Dickie to decide. Frank Buchman used to say, "The only thing left to do in a crisis is to change people".

Political ideas in West Asia are at the heart of today's events, among them Islamism, Arab Nationalism, and Zionism. Each asserts the iden-

This issue was edited by Ann Carpenter and Dron Hore-Ruthven, with lay-out by Blair Cummock. Please send material for the next issue by October 25 to Janet Paine, 7 Lindow Rd., Old Trafford, Manchester M16 0DP. Tel 0161 881 6674, or <mjpaine@compuserve.com>

tity and ideals of a group. Each at times can fall into the hands of violent bigots. Likewise the ideals of the western democracies, many of them grounded in Christianity, can be corrupted by fanatic nationalism and market fundamentalism.

### **Standing together**

For Muslims, Christians and Jews, the overarching idea comes in the command from the law of Moses, that we love God with full heart, soul, strength, and mind, and our neighbour as ourselves. We can choose either to threaten each other, or to stand together in the battle of good against evil in our midst.

Some years ago my wife Jean and I were invited to Abadan in South Iran by a friend in the National Iranian Oil Company. One day he asked us to talk with the senior Islamic cleric of the region. After a few tense courtesies the man attacked the morality of the west at some length. We admitted the downside of our culture, and said we were in Iran to represent something different and to learn. We urged him to believe that the Almighty is powerful enough to change the British. He relaxed and started to be honest about how his own people's behaviour fell far short of Muslim ideals. In a later talk, after we had become good friends, he gave us a verse from the Koran

which he felt best described the work of moral and spiritual rearmament:

"If those who are believers practise what is pure and honest, God who is merciful will give them an affection for one another."

### **Make it practical**

The challenge is to make this practical. We have to live with the evil of September 11, and its causes and consequences. We need to face our own failure to live the best we know. Yet in silence, morning by morning, the God of unchanging love still offers each of us the initiative, the fresh start, to help change the world for the better.

**Peter Everington**

*\* Obituaries in The Daily Telegraph – 'Opening batsman who believed that cricket could be a creative activity reflecting the glory of his Creator'; The Independent and The Times, 'Batsman of dash and verve who set hearts beating when he came to the wicket.'*

### **TERRORIST ATTACK ON USA**

*Imam Abduljalil Sajid, Chair of one of the committees of the Muslim Council of Britain and Vice-Chair of the World Conference on Religion and Peace has sent these reflections:*

I watched with shock and horror the events unfolding in America on

injustice and poverty, which breed the conditions in which terrorism thrives. We would be foolish indeed if we did not re-double our efforts to deal with these conflicts and injustices." Nevertheless, we felt there were hopeful signs, with many turning to God and questioning old assumptions about our world. One thought from a time of quiet was: "Could we set a movement of the Spirit going in this country of all faiths, coming together in small groups like this where the Holy Spirit can talk to us before our hearing is drowned by voices of vengeance?"

### **Faith or fear**

We discussed the need to choose between faith and fear as they cannot co-exist. Someone advised: "Pray for the person of whom you are afraid – by first name if possible." Another question was whether we regard all the citizens of this country, regardless of colour or ethnic background, as British or some as 'other'? Is there tolerance or brotherhood?

**Peter Hinton**

### **USE ME AGAIN!**

The Lone Viking is back with 461.5km under my cycling helmet. Thanks to your generosity, the trip will have brought in £4,000 towards the expenses of delegations from Sierra

Leone, Palestine and Sudan to Caux.

London was world's apart from Toulouse, my departure point. Strong winds and soaring temperatures pursued me to the end. By the time Perpignan was in sight it was 40°C. No matter, the unfolding scenery and the good food kept me going. With no disasters enroute – only steep hills, three punctures and an increasing loneliness, I rejoiced in the company of my daughter Katharine who flew down to spend the last few days with me. All in all, thirteen days of leg work and then the triumph of arriving to lie on the beach at Collioure. A big thanks to you all for your encouragement and donations. We did it together.

**Ann Babington**

### **HOUSEKEEPING AT CAUX**

When, at 82, I was invited to join the housekeeping team again I thought younger people were needed. I discovered that there were indeed younger men and women, from Ukraine and Poland who wanted to come but who needed financial help. With friends we raised £500.

Recently the housekeepers wrote with gratitude: "As we look back on the summer, we marvel at the rich experiences and encounters. During the conferences we were more than 40 housekeepers from 17 countries – but not all at once."

**Irene Owens**

## **ACTION FOR LIFE**

As an evacuee in 1940 and again in 1944, I often wondered about the villages I lived in and how they might look to a New Zealand townie 60 years on! So it has been with a mixture of nostalgia and delight that my wife Glenys and I have spent a month discovering those wonderful spots in Devon and Somerset to learn something of our forbears and their stories.

## **Five months in India**

We leave for India to join the *Action for Life* programme, the vision of Renjou and Grace Liu of Taiwan. Twenty young adults from 14 countries (Moldova to Papua New Guinea, Korea to Canada) will gather at Asia Plateau, Panchgani, in a programme aimed at developing the qualities of leadership and spiritual growth so clearly necessary if nations are to live in peace. All have had some experience of MRA, and a commitment to live it out. Visits are being planned by Indian friends to neighbouring cities and towns. These will be developed and extended by the group itself. Daily life in India, its villages and its cities, will provide a challenging focus. The five month experience in India will be followed by five months in other parts of Asia. For this the group will split, half going to Malaysia and half to Taiwan, from where small parties will journey to other countries to

work with local teams. The culmination of *Action for Life* will be the Asia-Pacific Youth Conference in Malaysia in July 2002, at which many new young people are expected.

The budget for *Action for Life* is US\$150,000. Participants have been asked to contribute \$2500 each. With these sums, and generous donations from several countries, US\$102,000 has been raised so far.

**Peter Wood**

## **WESSEX MEETING**

Father Elias Chacour, Palestinian priest and author of *Blood Brothers*, and I were among those attending the Agenda for Reconciliation conference in Caux. I was asked to speak in church on September 9 about our experience. Little did I realise the relevance of this at the time.

At a gathering in Wessex on September 21 friends, old and new, observed a minute's silence. People had a chance to say what was on their hearts. We heard hopeful news from Caux as we addressed the issues raised by recent events. Dr John Lester spoke about the talk he gave there on how to move from the House of Fear to the House of Love. He spoke of the need to come to grips with evil, which aims to suck people into an evil response. Force alone will never beat evil.

Many agreed with a local MP who wrote: "I think we have to be alive to

Tuesday September 11 2001. It was unbelievable to witness such a dreadful, wanton evil act of senseless murder. These killings cannot be justified by any religion. I immediately condemned this crime against humanity and offered my sympathies on behalf of the Muslim community to the families of those whose loved ones were lost or injured.

I personally know that many Muslims have been killed. I believe that whoever is responsible for these atrocities, regardless of their religious, ethnic, racial, political, cultural or political beliefs must be brought to justice and punished without any discrimination.

## **The sanctity of human life**

I must make it clear that Islam upholds the sanctity of human life, as the Holy Quran declares that killing one innocent human being is like killing the entire human race (5:32) like all other faith traditions. Killing one's own self (suicide) is a major sin in Islam as it is an abuse of the Divine gift of life. According to Islamic Law those who commit or try to commit suicide are committing an evil act and will be sent to the fire of hell.

I am glad to note that from the very beginning the British Prime Minister together with the American President made it clear that Islam and the Muslim commu-

nity are not to blame for the tragedy. We are dealing with fanatic individuals who have behaved in the most abhorrent and abominable manner. This is not a crusade or conflict between Islam and the West. The Rt Hon Tony Blair said: 'Blaming Islam is as ludicrous as blaming Christianity for loyalist attacks on Catholics or nationalist attacks on Protestants in Northern Ireland.'

## **Address the roots of hate**

Unless the roots of hate are addressed there will be irrational people who will continue to commit such heinous, evil crimes against humanity. Let all sensible people stand for justice and make concerted efforts to fight terrorism by eliminating all injustice and exploitation in the world. I believe that being tough on the causes of this evil act is as important as identifying the terrorists themselves.

I believe that without a revival of moral values, nurturing a shared sense of forgiveness and understanding we may face an even greater challenge. We must pray to overcome hatred and violence in ourselves. Let us rededicate ourselves to peace, human dignity, and the eradication of the injustices that breed rage and vengeance. It requires multi-religious co-operation of all decent people of the globe.

## A LEADERSHIP OF EQUALS

I have just finished my term on the International Council. It has been a privilege and a joy, although not always easy, to serve in this way. We have come to trust each other and to know each other's strengths and weaknesses, such as, organisation, forward thinking, spiritual insight and practicality. So we have both complemented and challenged each other. We met three times each year for five to seven days; we travelled widely in small groups in Asia, Africa, South and North America to get to know our teams in the different regions. In between, we corresponded on dozens of matters, often involving ten to forty e-mails a day. But I will miss it all – especially the teamwork with wonderful friends.

### Real work just beginning

When we started, we had hoped to move swiftly into thinking how MRA/Initiatives of Change could be more effective in strategic areas of the world. But we found that internal issues, such as the name and the need for a clearer framework for those who felt called to work with MRA, urgently needed attention. There are so many strong views around and an amazing amount of energy can be absorbed in this way. We had been asked to give leader-

ship and we are now confident that these issues are either settled or well on the way to being so. In a way it is a sad moment to be leaving the IC as the real work is just beginning.

### Clear leadership

In the early years of the Oxford Group and MRA, there was clear leadership from Frank Buchman and the team around him. Then we had a few years of the inspiring leadership of Peter Howard. When he died, many of us decided to be 'fully responsible'. We grew in faith and maturity but none of us had the charisma, the wisdom or the size of vision of Frank or Peter.

In the 90s we began to realise how much MRA needed a 'leadership of equals'. That is how, after a long process, the International Council came into being. We now feel that we can concentrate on seeking, with all of you, the new 'shared visions' that will mark the events of coming years. What, for instance, is the equivalent today of Frank's vision of reuniting enemies after the last world war, encapsulated in the simple sentence on his arrival at Caux in 1946, "Where are the Germans?"

Some feel that MRA is smaller now than it was then. In some ways that is true. But, as we of the IC have

reviewed the past 24 months, we have seen the variety and maturity of people from so many cultures and religious traditions who now feel responsible. They are leading a number of inspiring initiatives and one cannot but feel that we can be a powerful force for the future. And what a moment to renew our calling and commitment.

### Core belief

In the minds of all of us, one point is of great concern – namely how to present the core of what we stand for and believe in for this modern, exciting but cynical age. There are some practical ideas circulating on this. I will continue to be involved in this particular area in co-operation with the IC and many others. I have still some energy left!

**James Hore-Ruthven**

### ONLY 12 WEEKS BEFORE THE GLOBAL HOHO

An historic gathering in India "for all who care about MRA (Initiatives of Change) and plan to give their best to it in the next 10-20 years".

Yes, count me in. I'm one of them. As a member of the Hoho preparation team that's my gut response and we welcome that whole-hearted, gut response from many more, not just to the gathering, but to this moment in history. As agents

of hope, faith and transformation in society, our service was never more needed.

On paper, about 160 from 35 countries have signalled their intention to take part – half of these are under the age of 40. Those who can't manage the full three weeks – December 30–January 20, will focus their participation from January 1-10.

There are many hopes for the time together but four emerge strongly. The need for time and space to build and deepen the friendships among us that can hold us true to our individual and collective commitment. To provide for an honest conversation about ways of working; hurts and fears – past, present and future, which may be blocking us. To share our experience of best practice around the world in meeting the Cyprus Goals of MRA. To be led in a process to find what God may want to reveal through shared realisable visions.

It's not too late to respond to the call to be part of this. Or to help others with financial support. We reckon it will cost each individual US\$1000. Commitments, comments, prayers can be sent to the Hoho Steering Team at Asia Plateau, Panchgani, Maharashtra 412 805, India or <globalhoho@yahoo.com.au> or <globalhoho@hotmail.com>

**Jean Brown**