

## Quote – Unquote

From a new biography,  
*Stuart Blanch: a Life*.  
(the former Archbishop of York)

*By the end of 1940 he was already launched upon a spiritual quest that he began to record by pencil in a series of pocket notebooks, small enough to fit snugly in battledress breast pockets. He began on 31 December. Writing in RAF Heaton Park, Manchester, on New Year's Eve 1940, he noted: "The end of what might have been the worst year of my life but has proved the best – the beginning of a new life. Before me the standards: absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, absolute love."*

Sent by a reader.

## The Changing Scene

Robert Hynd, Glasgow corporate and constitutional lawyer, gave an entertaining and informative talk at last November's *Greencoat Forum* on the historical origins of the Scottish Parliament. He spelt out in some detail how it is working in practice. He also outlined the other constitutional changes which are taking place in the United Kingdom and summed them up as 'almost a silent revolution that dare

not speak its name'. His challenging talk, slightly shortened, has been printed.

Copies can be obtained from David Hume, 11 Rushfield, Helen's Bay, Co Down, BT19 1JZ. Tel 028 91853749 Please send a book of first class stamps to cover printing and postage.

## FUTURE EVENTS

### London:

Greencoat Forums, 6.30 for 7.15pm

### March 19

**AnnWiddecombe, MP** will speak on *Faith and Politics*

### April 16

**Lord Plumb**, former president of NFU, MEP and member of the House of Lords.

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### March 10-13

IC/MRA programmes meeting

### Tirley Garth:

### February 8-13

Planning for *AfR* in Caux

### Brighton and Hove:

### March 6

Interfaith Group meet at 6pm at the Meeting House of the University of Sussex, **Dr Robin Mowat** will speak on *Faith in the Future – a historian's view*.

## LEBANESE TO VISIT BRITAIN

*Four men who have been engaged in efforts for national reconciliation in their country will be visiting UK from April 19-25:*

- **Assaad Chaftari**, who was deputy leader of the Lebanese Forces during the war in Lebanon and whose apology for what he did in the name of 'country' or 'Christianity' was made public in *Al-Nahar* newspaper in February 2000;
- **Mohieddine Shihab**, Notary Public of Ras Beirut, who, in Caux last summer, publicly apologised for atrocities he had committed as a commander of a Muslim militia;
- **Hisham Shihab**, a journalist who fought in the Muslim militia commanded by Mohieddine Shihab;
- **Judge Mohammed Murtada**, who overcame his resentment towards other communities and has been active in inter-communal dialogues.

Our invitation to the Lebanese was in response to an appeal by Mohieddine Shihab after the September 11 attacks in America. He asked IC/MRA to hold a conference in Europe to "confirm the human values that all people of different colours, creeds, and countries share" and to "take a stand against evil in all its aspects, sow the values of love, fraternity, and co-operation among people,

and denounce hatred, prejudice, and violence."

We replied, "As relations between the Muslim world and the West have come to a point of crisis, the lessons that you have learnt from your experiences in Lebanon are particularly appropriate. The understanding that you have gained about what evil means, and the cost of compromising with it in individual hearts, is a message the whole world needs to hear."

### Their programme is taking shape.

The main focuses will be London, Liverpool and Bradford.

There will be an evening meeting in Westminster Cathedral Hall (capacity 450) April 23; an evening with young people on April 24 at Greencoat Place and possibly an event in Parliament.

Gerald Henderson is working on the programme in Liverpool and Warrington, and Mike Smith is exploring possibilities in Bradford.

Invitations will be available as soon as the various events are confirmed. We would value your ideas and offers of help of any kind. The visit will cost in the region of £8,700 and we would appreciate your thoughts on how to raise this.

**Peter Riddell**

### Three aspects of the Hoho

It was a joy to be in India, on my seventh visit over the last 30 years, with Chloe, my daughter, on her first visit. But India also challenges one's 'comfort zones' and I found that this visit, facing the crowds and poverty of Mumbai and Pune, toughened my sense of resolve to want to see things different. Three aspects of the Hoho stand out for me.

Firstly, the 'story-telling' groups each afternoon. We were in groups of six to eight people and each day allowed time for one person to tell their life story and journey of faith in unhurried detail. They were profound times, leading to much laughter and tears. Some people's stories no doubt will find their way into print.

### IC's values in business and industry

Secondly, some 20 of us concerned with IC/MRA's values in business and industry met for two days with several senior Indian business people to discuss the globalisation of our various initiatives, not least through Caux

'Initiatives for Business'. There was warm response to this, and the decision was taken to hold an Asian-Pacific business and industry conference at Asia Plateau in January 2003. People from Europe and Africa will be encouraged to take part.

Thirdly, a gathering of some 20 people looked at the future of our publications. There was wholehearted support for *For A Change* and a desire to be able to use it more widely, despite exchange rates which make it very expensive in developing countries.

It was entirely appropriate to hold the Hoho in India, with its Gandhian tradition of non-violent resistance to injustice. Emerging from the Hoho was the conviction that the disparities of globalisation and the world's rich-poor gap, so much more on the world's consciousness since September 11, need to be an overarching concern of *Initiatives of Change*. Our part can be to help bring about the needed changes of attitude and motivation in people in many areas of life.

**Michael Smith**



Sunrise at Asia Plateau

Photo: Chloe Smith

### The Greening of 24 Greencoat Place



An environmental review of our activities at Greencoat Place was conducted last November. We identified the following areas where improvements are now under way:

- reduce electricity consumption by remembering to switch off lights and computers.
- reduce gas consumption by turning down extra heating.
- purchase recycled copier paper as well as recycling waste paper in order to 'close the recycling loop'.
- drink Fairtrade tea and coffee.
- test bio-degradable cleaning products around the building.
- take environmental considerations into account when travelling and organising events.
- raise awareness of environmental and sustainable development issues by subscribing to *Green Futures* magazine, published by Forum for the Future.

The Green Team has taken responsibility for overseeing these improvements and would be interested to hear suggestions and answer queries regarding environmental issues from others around the country.

You can email the team at <[green@london.mra.org.uk](mailto:green@london.mra.org.uk)>.

**Mike Carpenter**

### Adventurous spirits wanted

Young people who would like to lead an international work team of volunteers at Caux this summer are needed.

An important aspect of creating an international community at Caux is the teamwork that develops around the practical tasks of running the house. 'Interns' will give leadership in this, and are asked to commit themselves for three weeks in July or August with a few days of training at the start. The dates of the three sessions are July 3 – 24, July 20 – August 10, August 1 – 21.

The work will take six hours a day on average, with at least one day off a week and time to participate in some conference activities. Applicants must be at least 18 years old, with a good command of English and preferably knowledge of other languages. Good leadership and management skills are required, experience with diverse groups and skills related to the area of service. The positions include kitchen department heads, dining room service leaders, housekeepers and administrative assistants.

For more information and applications please contact Cricket White, Caux Conference Facilitator at <[Cauxinterns@aol.com](mailto:Cauxinterns@aol.com)>. Please indicate preferred dates and areas of service. First consideration will be given to applications received by April 1, 2002.

## Summit of World Muslim Leaders

**Imam Dr Abduljalil Sajid** of Brighton, a member of the Muslim Council of Britain, was selected to represent Britain at the Summit held in Jakarta, Indonesia, from December 21-23, 2001.

In his speech to the Conference on December 22 he said, "As a Muslim I must take account of deeds by other Muslims in the name of Islam. I feel ashamed when I hear that Muslims are breaking the Law of Islam. I sincerely apologise to those who have suffered due to any senseless actions of so-called Muslims." He proposed that the Conference should confirm that Islam is a faith of moderation and a girder of unity for all mankind. "We believe," he said, "in thinking globally but acting locally. The world will not be changed for the better unless the conscience of individuals is changed first."

## Somalia

With his country much featured in the scenario of the war against terrorism,, Osman Jama Ali, the deputy Prime Minister of the Transitional National Government (TNG) of Somalia, has been visiting London again for consultations. As before, Sir Jim Lester arranged an appointment with the Horn of Africa department of the Foreign Office for Osman to present his government's position. "The TNG fully supports the international campaign to combat terrorism in all its forms," he stated, "and my President has firmly declared that our govern-

ment is not the Taleban and he is not Mullah Omar!"

A Commission for Internal Reconciliation has been set up under Osman's chairmanship. He told us that in the course of this work in the different regions the appropriate printed materials of IC/MRA are proving effective in laying the essential basis of trust.

**Jim Baynard-Smith**

### CAUX, 5 July – 18 August, 2002

A series of international conferences *Globalising Responsibility for Human Security*

**5-10 July** – Service, responsibility and leadership

**12-18 July** – Connecting communities for reconciliation and justice

**20-24 July** – Globalisation – from conflict to opportunity.

**27 July-3 August** – The road to renewal

**4- 10 August** – Peacebuilding initiatives.

**11-12 August** – The spiritual factor in secular society

**13-18 August** – Human security in a changing world.

Caux programmes are available from Greencoat Place.

## A strong band of passionate people

The Hoho was a mixture of pressing agenda and spirit-filled quiet, which, I suppose, reflects the general state of IC/MRA. There were several things which impressed me: a sense that there is a strong band of passionate people from all round the world willing to take IC and the four standards into the 21st century; that the centres of high activity are shifting; we all have a lot to learn from those who have found the right message for their own country; there is a growing sense of a re-flowering of love in the international fellowship, and 'open channel' leadership, lowering the hurdles of race, gender and age.

### A call to action

A potential 'Sorry Day' in Canada, a 'Clean Africa Campaign', reconciliation work in Pakistan and Afghanistan, globalisation concerns regarding poverty, ethical education programmes, general leadership training both in and out of Initiatives of Change – all of these need material to use in the field. This is only a sample of the visions we discussed. Was God calling us to action? It certainly felt like it.

### Can we do it?

'Training' was a well-used word in Asia Plateau, aimed at re-arming the troops for new work, new ideas and a new spirit of application. Have the four absolute standards lost their edge in the new relativistic millennium? No, they are more relevant now than ever.

We are called to find them a voice appropriate to those listening.

**Nick Foster**

## Impressions of the Hoho

To tell you the truth this is possibly the most difficult piece I've ever been asked to write, simply as it's impossible to try and do the Hoho justice in only 200 words. The experience of being in India for three weeks in itself would have been enough to fill a small library or two.

When I came I was still, I guess, quite a new person to IC/MRA despite being the last product of one of the oldest MRA families. It was to be the first conference in which I would play a really active role. The main items on my agenda were to try and do what I could to update MRA's policies on inclusiveness, particularly on issues of creed and sexuality; and to attempt to raise awareness of the need for cultural education in western culture and its uses as a road to world peace.

While I was there, however, I became far more involved in a process of self-discovery which for me was long overdue. I found the story-telling groups to be one of the greatest things MRA has ever introduced. I hope it will become a regular part of all conferences. From experiences as simple as having a conversation with someone over a truly brilliant Indian meal to watching the sun rise from the top of the Plateau on New Year's Day, it was undoubtedly a life-shaking experience, and I'm certainly not the same person as I was when I arrived.

**Owen Lean**

## Day of 'Open homes, listening hearts' around the world.

(A proposal from the Hoho.)

On Saturday, June 1, 2002, under this theme, everyone is encouraged to open their hearts and homes to a person, family or group from a community different to their own and with whom they would not normally interact, thereby crossing religious, ethnic, tribal or social barriers. That day can be the start of building many relationships for understanding, reconciliation and justice.

### "A neighbourly society"

Most of us either heard or read in the press the Shadow Home Secretary Oliver Letwin's call for a "neighbourly society"; also Simon Jenkin's suggestion (*The Times*, January 18, 2002) that Mr Letwin had "wisely appealed to Adam Smith's maxim of seeing not what causes poverty but what causes wealth,...a concentration not on crime but on non-crime". In other words, rather than continually emphasising the problem, perhaps we should be concentrating more on the creation of a truly neighbourly society in which such practices would be less likely to flourish.

### The weather, the Health Service and the railways...

This possibility was brought sharply into focus for me recently when waiting to be served in a local store. I was one of a group of ladies who, as I joined them, were hard at it, gloriously united in their shared negatives about practically everything, from the weather to the state of the Health Service, the railways..... Looking at their faces however I saw bitterness and

unhappiness beneath their obvious immediate enjoyment. After a quick prayer for wisdom, I found myself saying: "But, wouldn't you agree that we in Britain also have something rather special to offer?" Unwelcome intervention to say the least! "Oh yes! And what would that be, might I ask?" one of the most aggressive retorted. I replied: "Good neighbours – we really care for each other as neighbours. We may never invite one another to a meal or socialise much, but we trust our neighbours with the keys of our home, looking after precious pets, even our children, doing shopping, running us to the hospital when ill and so on."

### "I couldn't have managed without her"

There was a pause. "She's right, you know," said a rather shy member of the group. "When I was ill my neighbour did my washing, brought in food, collected my pension. I couldn't have managed without her." One by one each produced stories of similar care, given without reward or praise every day in our communities and streets. I think we all left feeling our country really had something going for her –

something we were proud of and could all be part of which may indeed prove to be a foundation of the 'neighbourly society' Mr Letwin calls for, in which goodness rather than evil prevails. Perhaps it is not beyond belief to visualise this simple but generous and unselfish neighbourliness extending outwards, gathering all the countries of the world into a true family of nations.

**Barbara Guilbride**

### Reflections in a garden

All is change in nature and, whatever the season, gardeners rejoice and get to work. Stakes must be driven in to hold firm the growth of fruit and flowers. Change is not always welcome. There were two caterpillars on a cabbage leaf. Overhead a butterfly hovered. "Say what you will," said one caterpillar to the other, "you'll never catch me up in one of those things!" But for a caterpillar, transfiguration into a butterfly will take place.

In the spiritual life we can be transfigured too. The face of Moses shone when he descended the mountain, having spoken with God. Remember the man who came home so different that his own dog bit him? There is a radiance about that kind of change.

But there are constants in life too – things which remain unalterable. We cannot change our past, for example, nor our parents. If we aspire to serve God, and do good in this world, it will involve both change and steadfastness, and the past, and all we are, can

be caught up redeemingly into the future.

Some time ago my husband addressed an Oxford audience on the working of his faith in diplomacy. I sat next to the philosopher, Sir Isaiah Berlin, with whom he had worked many years before. At the end Sir Isaiah turned to me and said, "It is good in life to meet a man who never changes." I took that to mean that my husband had remained faithful to his initial decision for God through all the years. It is possible in our present climate to drift spiritually and not to notice. That is why, like plants, we need stakes to hold us. These stakes are the eternal truths of God and our decisions to hold by them.

When we arrived in a new diplomatic posting my husband would say, "Write down what you think needs to change because after a few days you will no longer notice it." Walking along recently I was startled by the thought, "Never forget, change starts in your life first." I thought I knew that. I obviously needed a reminder. Early Christian reformers knew this. Their motto was, *Semper Reformanda* (There always has to be change).

Each new day is like a new posting. Early on we can discern what needs to change, and what needs to hold firm in our lives. We can re-attach ourselves to God's truth and His unchanging love. Then, humbly, we might fulfil the prophet Isaiah's vision to be 'like a well-watered garden; like a spring whose waters never fail.'

**Ruth Mackenzie**