

## Holocaust Memorial Day

Michael Henderson was invited by South Gloucestershire Council to be their featured speaker on Holocaust Memorial Day. The event in Winterbourne included a lunch with the Council's European and International Forum, a talk to sixth formers at the Ridings School and a public meeting in the evening.

## New Publication

A new book by Mike Brown, *No Longer Down Under – Australians Creating Change* has just been published in Australia and copies are available in Britain. Mike writes of his own life journey and of fellow Australians who have influenced his life and thinking and who have made their mark on vital national issues.

Available from Grosvenor Books, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD, Price £10.00 plus postage £1.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### THE GREENCOAT FORUMS

6.30 pm for 7.15 pm on Tuesday evenings. To book your place please telephone 0207 798 6000.

### February 11

#### The Post-Consumer Society: an all-consuming hunger

Bishop Michael Marshall –

Assistant Bishop of London and Bishop in Residence at Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Street

### March 18

#### A Purpose for Life?

Paul Craig – Managing Director of Agrisystems Ltd. A small international management consultancy dedicated to 'challenging the causes of poverty'.

### April 8

#### Roddy and Ann Edwards

Roddy is the Chairman of Walkerswood Partners, a co-operative in Jamaica which aims to build partnerships for sustainable development based on trust. (See story on page 3.)

We would like to thank those readers who have sent contributions towards the cost of producing the newsletter throughout last year. The cost is £6, & for overseas £7.

Please make cheques payable to the Oxford Group and send to 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD

This issue was edited by Ann Carpenter and Phoebe Gill, with layout by Blair Cummock. Please send material for the next issue by February 24 to Janet Paine, 7 Lindow Road, Old Trafford, Manchester, M16 0DP  
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Initiatives of Change

# NEWSLETTERuk

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## 'A VISION WHICH CAN HUMANISE GLOBALISATION'

John Battle MP, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Faith issues, visits Greencoat Place

A year ago, when we were preparing for the arrival of the Lebanese former militiamen in April, Imam Sajid met the Prime Minister at a reception and informed him of their visit. The upshot was that John Battle MP, Adviser to the PM on Faith issues, welcomed the Lebanese in Parliament for three and a half hours. He listened carefully to each one, picking out points which had particularly interested him, and said he would pass them on to the PM at their weekly meeting. At the end he asked one of them to say a prayer to close the meeting. At the time he said that he would like a further

meeting with Initiatives of Change, and this took place on February 9 at Greencoat Place.

Seventeen people who are giving leadership in different aspects of IC's outreach gathered to meet him. After each one had spoken for a minute or so of the issues with which they are engaged, John Battle responded. He read out some notes that he had made as people talked: "uniting nations' rather than the United Nations; 'people with hurts become walking time-bombs'; the need for leadership in civil society; 'honest conversation' means forging a new language."



David Channer

John Battle, MP, right, listening to Lawrence Fearon describing the work of 'Hope in the Cities'

Then he told us of his own background.

“What comes across from what you have said is faith in the capacity for people to change”, he said. “A meeting like this will change me if I am open to it. This is right at the heart of politics; it links to the rehabilitation of prisoners and their reintegration into society; it links to poverty and violence; it is not helpful to ask whether people are evil or good.”

### Globally and Locally

He had been involved in setting up the Catholic ‘Justice and Peace Commission’ in Leeds and also ‘Faith in Leeds’. “How do we find hope in the cities? We need to think globally and locally at the same time.” As Minister of State at the Foreign Office, he visited 53 countries in two years, but at the end, he felt he wanted to try living in his own neighbourhood. “Do we really ‘live’ where we are, and how well do we know and serve our neighbours? How do we build community at a basic level? We should treat the people around us as ‘given’ to us, even though we may not like them at first sight.”

### Build from the Base

After a conversation with President Wahid of Indonesia on Muslim-Christian relations, Tony Blair had said to him, “We have to take the faith issue much more seriously”. John Battle said, “Faith

communities should have access and fair representation. Faith can be part of the problem but also part of the solution. We need to emphasise the potential and possibilities of the Faith communities. They tend to listen to people on the ground and have a vision which can humanise globalisation. We need to listen to the fears: fear of Iraq or of terrorism sets up a very negative dynamic. One thing we can do to develop hope is to build from the base, e.g. providing services at the local level.” He concluded by saying that he would like to return to take more time with smaller interest-groups.

Geoffrey Craig gave a vote of thanks, referring to Frank Buchman’s legacy, and presented John Battle with a copy of ‘Frank Buchman – a Life’ signed by all present.

**Peter Riddell**

*The following letter appeared in ‘The Times’ on January 13:*

### Strength of a Nation

Sir, Niall Ferguson (T2, January 6) refers to Lord Curzon’s claim that “the British Empire is under Providence the greatest instrument for good that the world has seen”.

Is it too much to hope that under Providence the British nation could yet become the “greatest instrument for good”?

## GREENCOAT FORUMS

### The most crucial occupation

The first Greencoat Forum of the New Year took place on January 21, when **Professor Richard Whitfield**, Emeritus Professor of Education, spoke on relationships in the family and society.

He believes passionately that parenting is the world’s most crucial and valuable occupation. He said that today’s society has outsourced the parental role and that most resources are spent on rescue operations rather than the prevention of family breakdown.

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### Parenting is the world’s most crucial and valuable occupation.

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He cited statistics indicating that 40% of young mothers in our inner cities are clinically depressed and 90% of the prison population lacked the security of attachment to one person who really cared for them up to the age of three. He said we needed the social equivalent of the Green movement.

He issued a wake-up call to society to recognise the underlying causes of social dysfunction,

saying that these derived from the failure of relationships in the home. He suggested that everybody looked at their own life history and patterns of behaviour. He spoke of his lively experience of giving time to listen to God in the early morning, out of which he felt that his most creative and satisfying years have come.

The New Zealand government is implementing Professor Whitfield’s programme for a holistic approach to youth development.

**Annejet Campbell  
David and Elizabeth Locke**

Many of you will have been expecting the UK Newsletter to arrive as usual early in January. You will see that this is a joint January/February issue.

Late in December, we were all stunned and saddened to hear that our dear friend and fellow Editor, Dron Hore Ruthven, had passed away very suddenly.

We send our love and our thoughts to all of Dron’s family at this time. She will be greatly missed.

## NEWS FROM THE

### 'Educare not just education' for Afghan refugee children

If some good has come out of the terrible attacks of September 11, 2001, then 'it is the heightened awareness of issues that affect the region' of Afghanistan and South Asia, says **Charlotte Bannister-Parker**. The co-founder, and former chair of trustees, of the British educational charity, Learning for Life (LFL), spoke at a Greencoat Forum, on the theme of 'Reconstructing Afghanistan: the vital role of Education'. She stressed the need for 'girl-child focused' education in order to tackle illiteracy and empower women in one of the world's most impoverished regions. Under the Taliban regime 'girls would risk their lives' to get a schooling which had gone underground after being banned for girls by the Taliban. Conditions are still so appalling that one in five children in Afghanistan die before the age of five, she said.

### **Working in partnership**

Charlotte, whose Masters thesis was on women's education in development, stressed that Learning for Life works in partnership with local NGOs in the North West Frontier Province of

Pakistan, to set up village schools. They also work closely with Afghan Relief and Reconstruction in funding and running five schools for Afghan refugee children in Peshawar, Pakistan and are now planning to move into Afghanistan itself.

### **Quality not quantity**

Charlotte and LFL Secretary Helen Starkie showed recent colour slides of bombed-out Kabul. Charlotte stressed that the children's education has to be tailored to local concerns, such as awareness of the dangers of unexploded land-mines. Parents and the local community are responsible for 50 per cent of the syllabus. 'We are looking not at the quantity but the quality of the education.' In Britain, the organisation runs a schools service to show pupils what life is like for children in other parts of the world.

They raise £250,000 a year and were one of two UK charities chosen for the Sunday Times' Children's Christmas Appeal last year.

Speaking about the psychological traumas of war on children, Charlotte said that their aim is to 'educare not just educate'. 'Children need education, and sport, and they need love.'

**Michael Smith**

In a letter to your newspaper on November 12, 1938, the Earl of Athlone (along with six other prominent figures) wrote:

"The strength of a nation is sown in the courage to admit her own faults. The glory of a nation is to have a creative message for the world. For this we need not only inspired statesmanship but daily inspiration in every business, every workshop, every home. We must teach ourselves to apply practically to conduct the Christian standards of honesty, purity and love, and to make fulfilment of the will of God the touchstone of public and private life".

One gets weary of hearing only about the strength of the pound, the strength of the economy, etc. What of these other aspects of the strength of a nation as outlined by the Earl and his colleagues?

Yours faithfully

**Patricia Ducé**

### **Leadership at the Grassroots Level**

The Managing Director of the Jamaican company, Walkerswood Caribbean Foods, Woodrow 'Woody' Mitchell has received the prestigious 2002 Norman Manley Award for 'Excellence in Service to the Community'.

The citation noted, "In a time when many persons in the country seem to exhibit little or no traits of self-reliance, this man has been able

to provide leadership at the grass-roots level, building the self-confidence of his fellow Jamaicans so that they have successfully initiated and sustained their livelihoods".

Woody received a standing ovation, before going on to challenge the audience to get the balance right between wealth creation and wealth distribution. He went on to point out, "The serious disconnection between central government, local government and local community groups" and called for a formal structure to help the reconnection.

In addressing the issue of violence in the nation, he shared the Walkerswood experience of conflict resolution. "We believe in our quiet times in the mornings – a time when we read our bibles, listen to God and seek his direction for our lives. I want to recommend this approach to you and the nation, I can assure you it works. Many a hurt has been healed in our community.

I would be remiss, should I not say a word to the disabled community. Oftentimes, we feel that we have drawn some bad cards in the game of life but I want to encourage you to make your contribution from whatever station in life you may find yourself. To those of you who may have opted out of the race of life, I want you to take cognizance of this award, to be encouraged and to redouble your efforts as you begin your upward journey in life."

## A POWERFUL EXPERIENCE

An 82-year-old patient on our ward, Mr O, is ill with cancer and his condition is such that no further medical treatment is beneficial. We are trying to keep him comfortable and well cared for until the end of his life. Nursing him has been difficult. Despite the good care he receives this patient is grumpy, rude and demanding with anyone within range. Nothing is good enough for him. There seems to be a lot of baggage of bitterness in his past.

### Tell her you love her

His only daughter, a very kind lady who lives in the USA, comes over to be with him. But he makes life difficult for her too. The day his daughter leaves, he will not say goodbye to her, which distresses her a great deal. The nurse looking after Mr O, who has got to know him quite well, has the courage to speak frankly: "You are a horrible man. How can you treat your daughter like that? Say goodbye to her and tell her you love her." This brings about a more satisfactory farewell. Next day, while I help Mr O with his wash, he seems more grateful than usual. On the other side of the closed curtain four patients are receiving Holy Communion and we hear the Lord's Prayer. He stops me to listen to it. Then he

says: "You've done a wonderful job. Thank you."

Another day passes and during his wash he suddenly says to me: "It's my daughter's birthday today and I have sent her a card." I am astonished, but his neighbours confirm that they helped him to send it as his hands are very crippled. Later, a colleague tells me with some emotion that Mr O wants to phone America. Amazingly, he manages to speak to his daughter in her lunch break at work. He wishes her Happy Birthday and says he loves her. I am told she was in tears and said that was the best birthday present ever.

### More than a miracle

The staff are busy the next morning and Mr O gets washed late – something he doesn't like – but he is patient. We talk about the phone call and what a miracle it was that he spoke to her just at the right moment. "It was more than a miracle. I know I am forgiven." His voice is very soft and it takes an effort to understand him. At his request I arrange for him to receive Communion. When I relate the story to the nurse mentioned above, she says: "When forgiveness comes, it is a powerful experience."

I find it a privilege to care for him for the next four days over Easter. His voice is less and less

audible and communication becomes more feeble. Sometimes he pushes me away when I want to do something for his care. I say, "It's time to let go, Mr O, just let me care for you." He is sometimes a little confused and once he whispers, "I want to say farewell, because I am going home on Monday." When Easter Monday comes I go off duty and I say goodbye to him. He dies at ten past seven that evening.

**Maria Grace**

*Since last summer a number of people from different parts of the world have been working with 'Initiatives of Change' in UK. Sarah Wood from New Zealand writes:*

My five months in Britain have been varied and fulfilling. It has been a great experience to work with others at Tirley Garth, with the schools programme, and on *Global Express*. In addition, being introduced to numerous Chinese families and students has helped to clarify and broaden my vision for returning to China in the future.

As I look forward to working with *Initiatives of Change* in Taiwan from April 2003, I sense that my time in Britain has very much been a preparation for that.

I will leave with a deep sense of gratitude for the personal friendship and care that I've

received here. I have been inspired by the examples of many devoted to seeing the 'world renewed'. And somehow I now feel more confident that I have a part in this too.

## Film screening in Paris

Before her death last year, my mother-in-law made several suggestions for the outreach of the film *The Cross and the Bodhi Tree* in France.

Two people she knew led us to a Paris-based organisation called *Film et Spiritualité*. The Director of this, Jacques Oger, screened the French versions of *The Cross and the Bodhi Tree*, *The Serene Smile* and *The Serene Life* at the Jesuit University of Paris.

Sister Bodhipala (Renée Pan) came especially from her monastery in Britain and spoke movingly of her calling to help heal the wounds of Cambodia. Mgr. Réne Coste, former President of *Pax Christi* in France, and Jean Fayet, President of *Initiatives et Changement*, also spoke. We explained to the audience how our film-making springs from our vocation with *MRA/Initiatives of Change*.

About 150 people came to the event and we sold almost £300 of videos. *Film et Spiritualité* will add the films to their website catalogue.

**Alan Channer**