

# UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION

## --WESTMINSTER--

Twinned with UNA Connecticut For World Peace, Disarmament, Development and Human Rights  
JOINT PRESIDENTS: THE BARONESS COX OF QUEENSBURY, LORD RUSSELL-JOHNSTON, THE RT HON, THE LORD JUDD OF PORTSEA



### Report on the Branch's activities 2002-2003

Your committee continues to explore new formats for the variety of subjects we hope to tackle. However, we need the participation of Branch members to make these events successful. To ensure our 2003-2004 programme is both useful and attractive to members, we will be devoting this AGM to sharing our plans and listening to members views. This report will be mailed to all members and we welcome their views also.

#### **Meetings**

**Following the last Annual meeting in July 2002**, Charles Gurney 1<sup>st</sup> Secretary, US Embassy, gave an address titled *Globalisation, the United Nations and the Challenges facing Africa*. He identified 'debt' as Africa's major inhibiting factor and stated that the US had pledged enhanced financial commitment to the stricken continent including fairer trading conditions for the opening of US markets to African goods.

**In November**, following the UN Security Council's agreement on Resolution 1441, the Branch organised a debate titled *Iraq 2002-Time to bend the UN Charter?* The speakers were Lord Ivor Richard of Ammanford, former UK Ambassador to the UN, M. Stephane Gompertz, Counsellor-General, French Embassy who both argued for a second Security Council resolution and Keith Hindell of the Branch who played devil's advocate, representing the position of the United States. The well-attended meeting was held in the House of Lords and was chaired by Lord Judd of Portsea, a Joint president of the branch, who contributed much to the debate.

**In December**, following the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, we held a meeting in the Sanctuary Pub, Tothill St, with a buffet lunch. About thirty branch members heard Joanna Phillips of The Stakeholder Forum lead a discussion titled *Where Next for the UK on Sustainable Development?* She urged the Branch to participate in the consultation process organised by DEFRA which sought views on key priorities and challenges for domestic action on sustainable development in the light of WSSD, and to help in the development of a process leading to its major review titled *A better quality of life: A strategy for sustainable development for the UK*. The Branch Executive Committee contributed suggestions.

**In July**, we held the inaugural Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen Memorial Lecture. Hans Corell, UN Under Secretary-General and UN Legal Counsel titled his address *Developing the Rule of Law among nations; A Challenge to the United Nations*. At a time when the UN was under attack from several directions, we were keen that he should deliver his message from a platform identified with the UN so we were delighted that Mr William O'Neil Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organisation released to us the largest conference hall in the building. We needed it as the event attracted over 400 people including many diplomats and senior members of the judiciary. Judge Rosalyn Higgins, a member of the International Court of Justice chaired the meeting. David Wardrop, branch Chair, gave a short opening address and Irving Stolberg, President of Connecticut UNA with which our

branch is twinned, proposed the vote of thanks. The event was organised in conjunction with the Bar Council which, following the meeting, hosted a dinner for the speaker, leading jurists and other guests including the UK Permanent Representative to the UN designate, Sir Emry Jones Parry.

### **Projects**

Following the sudden death of Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen, funding was required to publish the 2003 edition of the *United Nations Calendar of Peace*, a project that she had conceived and financially supported for over 10 years.

Against all the odds, Connecticut UNA, the International Hospitality Committee of Fairfield County and private donors raised sufficient funds to publish the 2003 Calendar. Contributions from UNA Westminster, UNA London & South East Region, UNA-UK and UNA Eastern Region totalling \$2,000 were much appreciated. In the UK, 2000 copies of the Calendar were distributed to branch members, London's education authorities, Race Relations councils, embassies and similar organisations.

### **Fundraising**

The Flag Day programme covered ten venues. We extend our special thanks to Helen O'Malley, Flag Day organiser and to Elizabeth Mackeith, our principal collector. Alas, Elaine Adam is no longer able to take part.

This year, the Flag Day collection was much reduced across the London & South East Region. Your Committee is seeking alternative schemes to raise funds and also to make more events like tonight's pay for themselves.

### **Exhibitions**

As in earlier years, the Branch took a stall at the *Fair Trade Fair* held on 14/15 December in Central Hall, Westminster. The event was principally devoted to Christmas gift sales and we sold many Christmas cards and distributed mounds of UN-related material. At times, the venue became swamped by the volume of visitors.

### **Branch Committees**

The branch Executive Committee continues to seek alternative locations for its meetings. These have included members' homes (Elizabeth Mackeith, David Wardrop) and the *Thai Pavilion East*, an excellent restaurant opposite the Imperial War Museum.

### **Links across the country and around the world**

**Shortly after the end of the Iraq war**, the BBC radio programme *Westminster Hour* broadcast a programme about the United Nations. The programme used as its continuing link the views of members of the Westminster UNA Executive Committee, recorded at a special meeting.

**In December**, Alicia Seyton, one of the late Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen's oldest and closest friends visited London for three weeks from 22 December, attending the Christmas dinner.

**In May**, we welcomed Mr Zawahir, UNA Sri Lanka, to a meeting of the Executive Committee. He told us about educational projects undertaken by UNA Sri Lanka and invited us to send a small delegation to his country to learn more about it and its role in the UN system.

**In July**, Westminster UNA co-ordinated a Friendship Visit for members of Connecticut UNA. Our Secretary, Paul Mrazek, organised a series of social events for them including visits to the UN Department of the FCO, the Houses of Parliament (hosted by Tony Colman and Lord Judd), a luncheon briefing at UNA-UK and a briefing on the work of the International Maritime Organisation. Members of UNA-UK joined the Connecticut group for these briefings. A reciprocal visit for us to visit Connecticut and the UN in New York is planned for July 2004. If you are interested, please contact Paul Mrazek.

### **UNA-UK Study Tour to Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand**

This two-week tour in March/April was organised by Paul Mrazek, our Hon Secretary and all agreed that it was very successful. A report by Harold Stern written for the *London Dispatch*, the London & SE Region newsletter, has been circulated at the meeting. Further details about the tour can be reached via the UNA-UK website, [www.una-uk.org](http://www.una-uk.org)

### **The future**

The branch needs to secure its financial future through innovative branch funding schemes and through attracting new members. Most of all, it needs input from its membership. The challenge facing the United Nations as a concept is greater than ever before and the rule of law on which it is based is also being challenged. Grassroots support is vital so we urge our members to come to our meetings, propose new projects and get involved.

**David Wardrop, Chair**  
**12 September 2003**