

UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION

--WESTMINSTER--

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Twinned with UNA Connecticut For World Peace, Disarmament, Development and Human Rights

JOINT PRESIDENTS: BARONESS COX OF QUEENSBURY, LORD RUSSELL-JOHNSTON, LORD JUDD OF PORTSEA



Annual Report 2005-2006

**Four branch meetings, two conferences,
a law lecture, a wreath-laying ceremony,
a commemorative service in St Paul's
Cathedral, a website and more members**

Our activities

The 60th Anniversary of the founding of the UN, Service at St Paul's Cathedral

24 October 2005 On United Nations Day, Her Majesty the Queen led a capacity congregation in what was the most prestigious event worldwide to mark this important occasion. HRH the Duke of Edinburgh and Tony Blair MP, the Prime Minister, read the lessons. Lord Ashdown gave the address. The Rt. Rev. Richard Chartres, Bishop of London preached the sermon. *A Ray of Hope*, a choir from six schools in Belfast sang the *Gaelic Prayer*. After the service, together with the Blackheath & Greenwich Branch, we invited 250 guests to a reception in the crypt. Westminster Branch members led by the Rt. Hon. Jeremy Thorpe PC, Sir Patrick Cormack MP and branch chairman David Wardrop secured funding for and planned the service and the reception. Funding for the service came through generous industry support and through two successful applications for Lottery Grants for the travel and accommodation for *A Ray of Hope* and the reception. A report of the service together with photographs is posted on our website.

Disaster Prevention Strategies, Conference, Kings College London

3 October 2005 Experts expected little from the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Japan in January 2005 but TV images of the Boxing Day tsunami led governments to upgrade their intended participation, sending ministers, not officials. Our conference, held at Kings College London and titled "*Disaster Prevention Today, Lives Saved Tomorrow-Key outcomes from Kobe*" was timed to mark the International Day for Disaster Reduction and set out to review progress made by the international community since the conference in January. We assembled a knowledgeable team of experts, including

Sálvano Briceño, Director of the UN's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction; Thomas Loster, Chairman of the Munich Re Foundation; Badaoui Rouhban, Head of the Natural Sciences sector, UNESCO and Fenella Frost, Disaster Reduction Adviser to the Department for International Development. The conference attracted a large, well-informed audience who urged us to revisit the subject in 2007. We are grateful to Lloyds of London for sponsoring the post-conference reception. A comprehensive guide to this important subject and the complete texts of our speakers' presentations are posted on our website.

Branch Meeting, "*When the Security Council fails to act*"

26 January 2006 At the UN World Summit in September 2005, world leaders agreed on their collective responsibility to protect civilians from genocide as advocated by the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty titled "*The Responsibility to Protect*". However, at the UK-initiated debate on the issue in the Security Council in December, Member States appeared to be backtracking. In the view of your committee, Russia, China, Algeria, Brazil and the USA all sought to weaken references to their responsibility to protect civilians. This led us to choose the eve of Holocaust Day, 27 January, to hold a meeting on the issue. Our speakers, Zvi Rav-Ner, Deputy Ambassador of Israel, Alexander Sternik, Senior Counsellor at the Russian Embassy and Professor Francoise Hampson, University of Essex contributed to a fascinating debate. Lord Richard of Ammanford, former UK Permanent Representative to the UN and former Chairman of UNA, chaired the meeting. A brief report is posted on our website.

Branch Meeting, "*The Human Rights Council: is the UN reform programme on course?*"

14 March 2006 The proposal for a new UN body, the Human Rights Council, generated much debate. Would the compromise formula for election to and ejection from its membership, proposed by General Assembly President Jan Eliasson, gather sufficient support in the crucial GA vote? On the eve of that vote and with the USA threatening to derail it, Professor Peter Willetts, Professor of Global Politics, City University and Keith Hindell, Lecturer at the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy, SOAS, University of London, led a spirited exploration into the subject. Lord Judd, a Joint President, chaired the meeting.

Branch Meeting, *Liberia: Nation Building in a troubled region*

28 March 2006 Two years after our initial invitation, we were delighted to welcome Alan Doss, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Liberia who found time during his well-earned vacation to address us shortly after the election of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. His chronology of events in that country and his candid observations on its future were very informative and worth the wait. The meeting was chaired by Dr Vince Cable MP.

Branch Meeting, *Time for common sense in the UN's drugs policy: but will the UN and its member states dare to listen?*

26 April 2006 The UN Drug Conventions provoke intense disagreement between experts, clinicians and lawmakers but in 1998, the UN General Assembly set 2008 as the target date for eliminating or reducing significantly the manufacture, marketing and trafficking of illicit drugs. Hopes for success or even early consensus are premature. Our speakers, Professor Cindy Fazey of Liverpool University who pointed to flaws in the application of the UN Conventions and Grantley Haynes, Chair, Conference on Crack & Cocaine, a leading authority on harm reduction, led a packed meeting of members of both Houses of Parliament, drug experts and clinicians. The meeting was chaired by Paul Flynn MP. The branch's new webpage is intended to serve as an 'impartial portal' to this subject.

Annual Law Lecture, *Human Rights Law in Military Operations*

16 May 2006 The 4th Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture titled "*Do Soldiers Really Have to Apply Human Rights Law in Military Operations?*" was delivered by Professor Peter Rowe of The Law School, Lancaster University. He examined whether modern asymmetric military conflict could still sustain compliance with international law. He argued that obligations to European and International Conventions did not add to the burdens of the military since human rights obligations of the State are designed to ensure enforcement of them through national law. He saw the Armed Forces Bill (2006), then being debated in Parliament, as evidence of the healthy state of UK law as it affects the military. Professor Rowe's rigorously researched lecture will prove to be an important resource for students of the law as it applies to the military and it is posted in full on our website. We are grateful to Clifford Chance LLP and to the International Relations Committee of the Bar Council for their continuing support for this flagship event in the Branch's year.

Annual Peacekeeping Conference, *The role of civilians and the police in modern peacekeeping*

31 May 2006 Our 3rd Annual Conference to mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers, titled "*Keeping today's international peace: a job for more than the military*" was held again this year at and in association with the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies. Speakers to these issues were Kees Steenken, Swedish National Defence College; Stephen Chambers, Foreign & Commonwealth Office; Stefan Feller, European Union Police Unit; and Colin Smith, formerly with Hampshire Police, gave authoritative presentations showing how non-military personnel are playing increasingly important roles in modern peacekeeping. The FCO and the EU both chose our platform to announce important new initiatives in international policing. The Annual Folke Bernadotte Lecture was delivered by Professor Michael Pugh, University of Bradford and Editor of *International Peacekeeping*. He argued for the merging of peacebuilding and development policies in war-torn societies and for the transformation of the world trade system, of international aid and of the International Financial Institutions. "Building peace is a much broader issue than sending in peacekeepers." he stated, indicating that rich nations continue to overlook their most important contribution to international stability - creating a fairer trading regime. His address and those of his fellow speakers are posted on our website. We are grateful to the government's Global Conflict Prevention Pool for its continuing financial support for this event.

Wreath-laying Ceremony, The Cenotaph, Whitehall

31 May 2006 We believe our wreath-laying ceremony held during a break in the conference to remember those UN Peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the service of all humanity was the first such event held outside the UN Building itself. That this remains the case is both remarkable and regrettable. This year, a large crowd watched as diplomats from fifty-five countries laid wreaths at the Cenotaph. Prayers were said by Rev. Donald Prentice, Army Chaplain and Imam Qasim Rahid Ahmad. The Band of the Welsh Guards, under their Director of Music, Major David Cresswell, played during the ceremony.

UNA Annual Conference, Durham University

21-23 April 2006 The Branch was well represented and our delegates contributed to debate in all plenary and commission sessions. There was more opportunity for debate than in recent years but in our opinion there were fewer incisive resolutions, leaving more work for the national Policy Committee. The keynote address delivered by Shashi Tharoor, UN Under-Secretary-General, can be read on the UNA website at www.una.org.uk.

UNA-Connecticut

Westminster UNA retains close links with our twin, UNA Connecticut. Its activities can be followed through the hyperlink on the UNA Westminster website. We distributed 1000 copies of UNA Connecticut's 2006 United Nations Calendar for Peace to schools in Westminster and to racial equality councils throughout London. This initiative of the late Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen of UNA Connecticut goes from strength to strength.

Our Honorary Officers

We were delighted that Baroness Cox of Queensbury, Lord Russell-Johnston and Lord Judd of Portsea agreed to continue as our Joint Presidents and that Juliet Colman, Chair of UNIFEM (UK) accepted our invitation to serve as a Joint Vice-President alongside Granville Fletcher, the Rt. Hon. Jeremy Thorpe PC, Ben Whitaker and Elizabeth MacKeith.

Our Website

In our previous report, we announced our intention to *'introduce a comprehensive and informative website to make all members proud'*. Launched in November 2005, this offers a unique 'one-stop guide' to the UN Millennium Development Goals, reports on our major meetings and conferences with guides to relevant UN initiatives and it provides links to about 150 related websites. It features a UN-FM radio which plays funky World Music and a dove which when activated will fly across the screen, making *War* into *Peace*, all to the music of Tchaikovsky's 1st Piano Concerto. Now, that is different! We have been delighted with the reception given the website, designed by Petar Krstanovic, by branch members, UN staff, NGOs and visitors from many countries. Now, go explore www.unawestminster.org.uk.

Our Funds

The Branch has been able to embark on an ambitious programme of events in the knowledge that this is underpinned by the generous legacy of the late Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen. Your committee has been successful in attracting financial support for all of our 'flagship events' and thus we anticipate little change in our asset balances at the year-end.

Our Future

Last year, your committee promised to *'embark upon an exciting and sustainable programme to promote the United Nations and its many challenges and programmes'*. We hope you feel we fulfilled this promise during the year but this is worth nothing unless you, our members, support our meetings and initiatives. The very concept of the United Nations is being challenged again and all of us must be its advocates. So, please encourage your friends and colleagues to join the United Nations Association - and to join Westminster Branch if they live or work in the area. Let's together make next year even better.

David Wardrop, Chairman

on behalf of your committee

25 August 2006