



# NEW WORLD NEWS

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## CAUX CONFERENCE

### ASK THE FAMILY

**JENS WILHELMSEN** from Norway attended the conference with his wife, Klär, and two daughters, Camilla and Julia:

THE CONCEPT of the family is under attack in the West today. I believe this is because too many of us have used the family as a sort of mutual insurance company to protect the interests of the ones who are closest to us, often at the expense of other people. It seems that if we parents limit our responsibility to our own family and our own future, we will bring up a generation of selfish and narrow-minded children. And a nation of selfish families will inevitably become a selfish member of the family of nations.

When you look at the reluctance of the rich nations to share and to give adequate development aid, you realise that these nations are made up of families who put their concerns first. And when you have selfish nations around the conference table, you don't get a real dialogue. Instead you get a dialogue of the depths where leaders do not rise above the interests of their own nation to look at the whole.

I find that what actually communicates itself to my two daughters (aged 13 and 10) is not so much what I say as what I am. They have a very sharp eye for their father's weaknesses, especially in the realm of aims.

I have to decide all the time to put the needs of other people and nations before my own. Christ said once: 'The one who loses his life shall find it.' That is a very, very costly decision. I think one decision that we can make here in the course of these days is that our security is not in our bank account, it is not in a good education, but it is in doing the will of God and being responsible that our nation and the whole of mankind is improved. Families who live for such an aim will restore attractiveness and respect to the family institution in the world today.

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD was marked at the Moral Re-Armament conference centre in Caux, Switzerland, by a special session on 'The Family—Workshop for Future Society'. It was not a forum for experts but for families themselves to search together, through discussion and community living, for their role in creating the society of tomorrow.

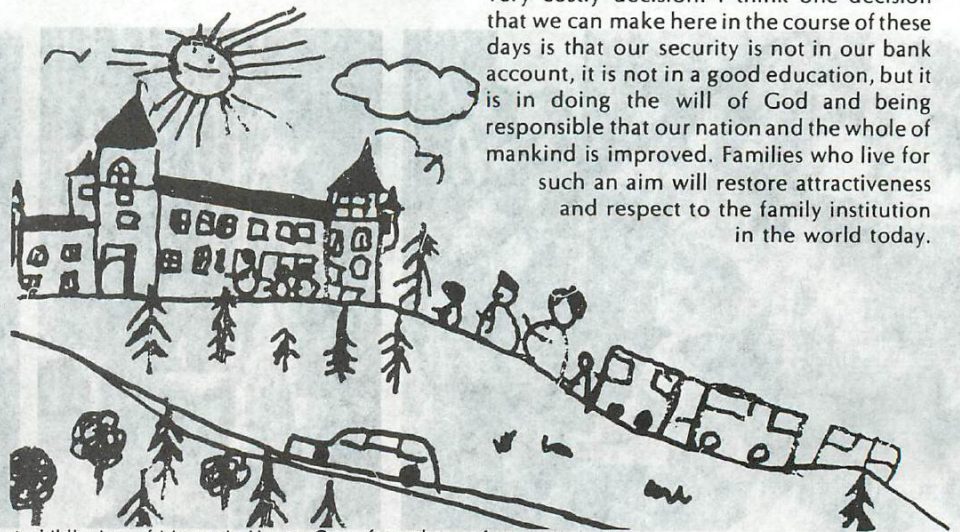
Recent figures indicate that the family as an institution can no longer be taken for granted. In societies as different as the USA and USSR between a third and a half of all marriages end in divorce. During the conference the family was subjected to some radical questioning as to its nature and purpose. Why get married? Why have children? What is the interrelationship between authority, discipline and freedom? What is the meaning of life? Such questions were considered first in plenary meetings and then thrashed out in smaller discussion groups.

Answers did not stop at a simplistic affirmation of the value of the family as a social unit. Rather they insisted that the family must prove its value through the quality of life and love it generates. If inside the family we begin to deal with selfishness, then the family can be a workshop for a new society. If we do not, then neither the family nor democracy has any future.

The presence of 150 children under 16 years old created a lively atmosphere, more like a home than a conference centre. One girl said, 'I feel more at home than at home.' While their parents were engaged in discussion groups, the children were busy in creative workshops, painting, baking, singing, acting, studying nature, making puppets and producing a newspaper on the conference as seen through the eyes of the young people there.

Two of the young journalists, describing a meeting on communication, summed up the challenge of the conference: 'Now it is up to us to draw our own conclusions and put them into practice.' Here we print some of the conclusions of family members of all ages.

**Denis Nowlan**



A child's view of Mountain House, Caux, from the conference invitation

## Holding the baby

**CHRIS HARTNELL** came from London with his wife, Anne, and 16-month-old son, David.

I NEVER QUESTIONED the idea of getting married. I accepted that I loved my wife and it was the thing to do. It had worked for my parents and it was going to work for me. That was my first fundamental mistake. I have realised that you have got to work at a marriage to make it work.

When our son David was born, I didn't alter my style of life at all. I am an activist by nature, and always think that the thing I want to do is more important than the thing Anne or David wants to do. This upset Anne very much. She was often in tears and she said to me, 'You don't care for David, you don't help with anything.' And then the nagging started. 'Will you bath him tonight?... You will bath him tonight, won't you?' This got on my nerves, so much so that I didn't really want to do anything with him.

Then Anne got sick and went to bed for a week. I had to keep coming and asking, 'What is he meant to do?... When has he got to eat?...' I hate changing nappies, but I learnt to do it. And I also learnt to love my son and we became friends. And he didn't always run to mother when things were wrong.

## Why marry?

**A Swiss secretary said:**

AT ONE POINT in my life I asked myself, 'Why get married?' I was living with my boyfriend in England, and I thought that marriage was just a rule set up by society. If we could get rid of this rule, I thought, then I would be happy and no one else would get worked up about what I did.

My boyfriend came from a broken home. Our flat was his home. I knew he was afraid of tying himself too tightly to me, of falling in love, because he was afraid of being hurt. And of course that is what happened. I don't know if he will ever be able to really love anyone again. That is my fault.

We played house, we played marriage,

**PADMINI KUMAR** from India took part in the conference with her small son, Siddharth.

I COME FROM what you might call an incomplete family. My father died when I was ten. I am an only child. My husband was killed in a road accident just two months before our first child was born. Right from the start I felt that it was important to give our son a sound and secure home and a good family life.

From very early on my son always wanted the companionship of men. He was missing his father. Every time this happens, something twists inside me. And yet I believe that God has told me that I must never hold pity for myself or for my son in my heart. But I mention this because children naturally want their parents and what they can give them.

My son is two years and five months old, but for quite some time now he has been asking, 'Where is my father? You say that my father is with God—who and where is God? What happens to us when we sleep? What happens to people when they die?'

Death has invaded his life very early. He was very close to my grandfather who died last February, aged 92. After his body had been taken away to be cremated, we found my son looking under the bed and behind

but one day reality had to come. And reality came to me here in Caux, when I had to be completely honest with myself about why I wanted him and what I wanted altogether. And the question came to me, 'What do you really want for him?' And I thought, 'I want him to become a man.' But I knew I could not help him any more. What sort of a man would he be only strong through a woman?

I knew that the only thing I could give him was for me, consistently, to go the way that I felt God had marked out for me. So I had to go my own way, and demonstrate for him that there is a Power greater than us which is available for each person.

Living together without promising anything may seem good, but it is not the best, because you only give part of yourself. I think that to give your whole life, that is love.

## Time to talk

the door—looking for my grandfather. He was very disturbed.

At bedtime the next day, I told him what had happened. I did not know if I was doing the right thing, but I felt I should do it. His reaction was very strong. I realised that he knew that just as he could not see or touch his own father, so now my grandfather had gone. And yet I had to say to him, 'I'm sorry, but that's the way it is. You can be sure that he is with God, and he is with your father and he will watch over you.' There was a long silence and then he accepted it and went to sleep. Many times since then he has asked and talked about his grandfather, but always with the peace of knowing that he is with God.

I have always felt that I must be available for my son when he needs me and that this is particularly important during the first years of his life. When he was born, someone offered to take care of him, if I wanted to go and do what I wanted with my life. I did not feel this was right. I also feel that if I had left him in a day centre, he would have just been one of many.

I have not always been able to be with my child for 24 hours of the day. But it does mean that I have to get my priorities right and build my programme around his needs. So that when he wants to talk, he knows that I am there—and that I will have time.

## Great grandmother

**Hélène Spoerri**  
Switzerland

I AM A GREAT GRANDMOTHER, with many grandchildren and five small great grandchildren. Almost five years ago my husband passed away on Christmas morning. I was able to keep our house. We have made some alterations and my elder daughter moved into the first floor and I live downstairs. She has an important job and travels a great deal. I do not see her much. I am alone.

When I first came home to my small flat and knew that everything was quiet and that I was alone, a deep thankfulness came to me. I had to say thank you for what I had learnt during all the years. I had learnt to



## Kitchen table communication

**Gunnar Eckhoff**  
Norway

I PRACTISE LAW in Oslo and I find in many divorce cases that one of the root problems is the lack of communication between husband and wife, combined with an attitude of demanding instead of giving.

Many of my clients have said, 'I do not love my partner any more and I do not see how I can renew my feelings of love for him, or her.' Often lack of communication results in a silence which can last for months. What answer can I give them?

A friend of mine, a well-known Norwegian Christian psychiatrist, Dr Gordon Johnsen, has started dealing with the lack of communication in family life by having the whole family meet together with him. The analysis of his team indicates that lack of communication is rooted in a lack of love and understanding which is not dependent on feelings alone.

find and obey God's direction, but in particular I had learnt something difficult, that I still have to keep learning. And that was, 'Are you ready to do everything for other people, to give them all that you have and to expect and want nothing for yourself?'

Then the idea came to me, 'Invite your friends.' I began to entertain friends, to make visits myself, to get involved with the neighbours, to look after the garden. I even began to revive my Italian—and so suddenly the days were full. I didn't have time for anything else any more. But I knew that I was in God's hands, and I knew that I was in His care. And that gave me a great peace and took all fear away from me. I can tell you that I have enjoyed each day since then, that I rejoice and am happy and thank God each day for His love and mercy.

Dr Johnsen describes six attitudes necessary for communication in marriage:

**Openness:** We all know the importance of not living behind masks if we want to have real contact with another person. I have experienced that by daring to be open about my defeats I found a new liberty, made new friends and had much better communication with other people.

**Trust:** Do we really dare to take the risk of trusting our husband or wife by telling each other everything? It means the risk of letting the other have full freedom, to trust him or her with money and in other ways. We can't demand trust, we can only offer it, give it. But in family life we cannot feel happiness without trusting each other.

**Nearness:** For me this means not to be absent with my mind while present with my family. Around the kitchen table my children ask sometimes, 'Father, are you here or not?' Nearness also means that I see when my wife or another person is in need of help and I take action to do something about it.

**Loyalty:** When we give loyalty, we give

## Letting go

**Peter Hegi, a headmaster from Bern, Switzerland, and his wife, Vroni, were two of those responsible for the session. Here VRONI HEGI speaks:**

MY HUSBAND AND I have three children. Suddenly the day came when our oldest son wanted to prove to himself, and others, that although he was only 16 he could get along without our help. He left school last spring, and had no idea what he wanted to study. The only thing that he wanted was to find work in the town nearby, to earn money and to set up a room for himself there.

This aroused many feelings in us parents. We pitted our will against our son's will, conviction against conviction. Full of fear, we kept asking ourselves, 'Will Urs find his way?' We had invested so much as parents.

security, the happy inner feeling of allowing a person to be himself and still be accepted. Loyalty also makes it possible to say the truth and to receive it.

**Tenderness:** It is first of all the willingness to speak kindly and to show care and love to one another. In many marriages I have found a complete lack of polite and gentle words, which kills the atmosphere in family life. In some marriages family members 'kill' each other by complete silence.

**Forgiveness:** It opens the way to peace and understanding between individuals, between groups and even between nations. Some wives have said to me, 'My husband has never said, "I'm sorry." He may send me a bunch of flowers the day after a quarrel, but asking forgiveness would have opened the way to better communication.'

Finally there is the point of vertical communication. These six attitudes have great importance for my relationship to God. And I have also found that there is a connection between my openness to God and my relationship with my wife, Ellen. I therefore see it as my highest responsibility to live near Christ and in the open. From such 'living in the light', the Bible says, we find true fellowship with one another.

And now it seemed as if all our efforts were in vain, because our son was not only wanting to move out but was questioning faith, moral standards and our whole life style.

It cost me all my pride, when I slowly realised that I must let my child go, without nursing bitterness in my heart or still wanting to control him from a distance. It was a gift of God that I could say 'yes' in the certain belief that God could look after Urs much better than we ever could.

On Mothers' Day he came to visit us unexpectedly and brought me a beautiful bunch of flowers. This meant a great deal to me, because it had never happened before. And when he left he said to us, 'Gottbefohlen' ('In God's hands'). Nothing more than a phrase, but it was like throwing a bridge to us, because my husband sometimes uses this expression when a member of the family is going on a journey.



### 'WORKSHOP FOR A FUTURE SOCIETY'

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PHOTOS:  
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# No doubts

**This speaker lives in Switzerland:**

I AM AN UNMARRIED MOTHER. And only now have I seen the importance of the questions, why get married and why have children, and how irresponsible I was in that respect. I have now understood that the relationship between a man and a woman must become sound before God before they enter into any other relationship.

When I became conscious of my daughter's existence I was shaken. It was painful. For the first time I was prepared to follow God's guidance uncompromisingly.

I was very fortunate that I was given the strength to follow my inner voice, and, against the will of my closest relative, I brought to life this new being. I knew that if I were to reject this life and destroy it consciously I would never be able to find a sound relationship with any other person and I would isolate myself completely.

My daughter is now 20 months old. There remains no doubt in my mind why we should have children and, if God ever entrusts us with a new being, why we should bring it to life at whatever cost. Almost every day I have to ask myself what I am doing wrong, why is my daughter reacting the way she does, what could I do differently?

It was with the help of my daughter that I found my way back to God—the source of life and strength.

# Healing the past

**by Joan Barton  
England**

WHEN MY PARENTS were married my grandmother insisted on living with them. My father died at 30, his health undermined by his divided loyalties. My mother, still young, had to find work. It was 1926—a difficult year. I had to go to boarding school.

In 1931 my grandmother took me to Brighton to live with her. My mother agreed to this for financial reasons, and I lived there for the next nine years. During this time my affections were won over. I was told my mother did nothing for me (she was unable to financially) and I grew up with that thought in my mind.

Mother was left bitter and unhappy, having lost both her husband and her daughter. She had to continue to work all her life. In those days it meant long hours and I saw very little of her during the short time I spent with her during my holidays. I felt no affection for her and always wanted

# Classless society

**A teacher from one of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe spoke in a meeting on communication:**

IN THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES we talk a lot about the classless society. When I mention this in the West, people often shrink at the expression. But when I first came here to Caux, some years ago, I saw people who were young, old, rich, poor, high politicians, workers, teachers, students, and they were all respected. In the kitchen everybody was welcome, no matter who they were, to do the wash-up. I thought, 'This is what we are fighting for in the socialist countries—a classless society.'

Wherever we are, in the West or the East, we have the same problems. We have broken homes, just as you have. But we have different ideologies and so we do not always use the same language and we cannot communicate. I was an atheist when I first came here. I could not understand what people meant when they spoke of 'absolute love'. The expression was meaningless to me—you hear about love everywhere, but you see so little of it.

But it is not words that have brought me back to Caux year after year, it is the caring spirit here—people want to listen to you, they want to help, or, what is perhaps more

to get back to my grandmother.

Growing up brought many emotional difficulties, as I tried to get from others the love and affection I had not had from a stable home.

In 1947 I came to London, where I joined my mother at my cousin's home. I took an office job and through someone in my firm was led to find a faith and the lost love and security I had been seeking.

Miracles followed this experience. Mother and I found a flat together. But deep down in our relationship there was something I did not understand that needed healing. Our experiment of trying to live together did not work. My business life, too, was unhappy and unsatisfying. I knew God had brought us together, but I did not understand what His purpose was. Although I had found something new in my life I gradually turned my back on God, while enjoying His gifts and all that my new life brought me. Mother sensed my turning away from her.

After some years of trying to live together

important, they want to help you to find out for yourself what you should do.

Another thing which I found hard to understand was when people here used to say, 'Let's be quiet and listen to God.' 'How can you listen to somebody you are so sure does not exist?' I thought, and so I resisted the idea. But then I tried it. For one or two years I listened, without believing in God. People had told me that in this way they had found a faith, and I thought they had been brainwashed. So I fought very hard against the idea of God. But then facts convinced me that there is something transcendental, no matter what we call it. Why not call it God?

I have often been repelled by the self-righteousness of the Western world towards the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. But what I did find in Caux was that my friends did not start to talk about our failures which we know already, but talked about the failures in their own countries. So I was ready to talk about our failures—otherwise I just did not want to.

I have met people from all over the world here at Caux. But we must try harder to bring people from the socialist countries. When Frank Buchman, the initiator of MRA, first came to Caux in 1947, I have heard that he asked, 'Where are the Germans? How do you expect to build a united Europe without Germany?' I would ask now: 'How do we expect to build a united world without the socialist countries?'

at various times and then going our separate ways I finally decided I should try and find accommodation near Mother, as she was getting older.

The years that followed gave us both a chance to help one another, and in January 1978 she died, aged 80. It was only then that I saw the full result of my grandmother's words, 'Your mother never does anything for you.' A seed had been dropped in my mind and had been there for 40 years. God's purpose in trying to get us together was for the past to be healed. During Mother's last illness I did all I could for her. The day before she died I felt I really did love her. I told her so, and she me. She died peacefully that night in her sleep.

I wished so much afterwards that I could have turned back the pages of our lives and given her the love she needed and which she seemed to be robbed of again and again. My turning away from God when we had the flat together thwarted His plan, not only for us both but in my career. The greatest lesson I have learned is that if we will only follow what God says, it will lead us, firstly, to the accomplishment of something for His purposes and, secondly, to the most satisfying and self-fulfilled way of living.