

Did we get it right, Love?

Did we get it right, Love?

– in the quest for a changed world

CHRIS EVANS

CAUX BOOKS

First published 2009 by Caux Books

Caux Books
Rue de Panorama
1824 Caux
Switzerland

also available from:

Initiatives of Change, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD

© Christopher F Evans 2009

ISBN 978-2-88037-518-8

Design and typesetting in 11.25pt Palatino by Blair Cummock
Cover picture by Sia Windig

Printed in Great Britain
by the MPG Books Group,
Bodmin and King's Lynn

Contents

Introduction	7
The proposition	12
India	19
'Us and them'	32
Try politics?	42
Business and the economy	47
Family	60
Eastern Europe	69
Spiritual journey – ongoing	82
The future is upwards	90

The author would like to express his thanks to Sia Windig for permission to use the picture on the cover, to Wendy Pugh for her meticulous proofreading, to Ginny Wigan for expert editing advice, and to other friends and family members for all their help.

Introduction

Forty years ago, with a group of friends, I set out to try to remake the world.

No, we hadn't been drinking, and it was not done on the spur of the moment. Some of us were even lucky enough to have the support of our parents. Our decision was in the context of the world-wide movement of Initiatives of Change (IofC), then known as Moral Re-Armament¹. We had the example of an older generation in that movement, and in the early years their active guidance.

But it was still preposterous.

I well remember the look on the face of an Israeli diplomat when two of us² explained to him that we intended to put right what was wrong in the world. His expression ran from nostalgia for his own idealistic youth, to stern remembrance of the realities of his world, to pleading with us to be realistic. Secure in my teenage certainties, I concluded that he was sadly lacking in vision and unwilling to change his ways. For me, and I think many of us, our friendship and sense of belonging were the most important thing at first. Changing the world came with that package. This order of

1. Moral Re-Armament was a name coined in 1938. I will refer to it by its acronym, MRA. In 2002 a new name was adopted, Initiatives of Change (IofC). I will call it MRA when describing events before 2002, and IofC for events since then.

2. Myself and Andrew Lancaster, from Australia, in Geneva 1969. Andrew is currently serving on the IofC International Council.

Did we get it right, Love?

priorities did not last long, but I doubt if many of us would have got started without it.

Some of us are no longer around, either through death or through disappointment. But a surprising number of us are still at it and, though spread throughout the world, still closely in touch with each other.

So, how are we getting on? The world has changed, for better and for worse depending on where you look. Of course it would have changed whatever any of us have done or not done. Since we have clearly not put right all that is wrong, does our youthful decision still seem such a good idea? That is the question I am asking myself as I write.

I will give a very personal answer, as honestly as I can, relying on my own memory and experiences and not attempting an evaluation of lofC as a whole. I will leave out many incidents, and even more people, that have been important to me but do not help answer this central question. This is not a memoir. Some things that are very important to me are omitted altogether, such as the story of our family home and business in Whitbourne, Herefordshire, where I grew up and now live, and the sports which add spice and colour to life.

Our lifetime experiment is far from over. It is too late for a half-term report, and too soon (I hope) for an end-of-term one. But a short while ago my time of service on the lofC International Council came to an end, and I am taking advantage of a lull in activity which this provides.

Sometimes over the years when a thought has struck me or I have felt something strongly, it has emerged in the form of a poem. I will use some of these poems, not with any literary pretensions, but to express what I was thinking or feeling at

Introduction

a particular time (for that reason, I will here and there add the year in which the poem was written).

The title *Did we get it right, Love?* is taken from one of them, written in the first days of the new millennium, while we were busy celebrating, and waiting for the 'millennium bug' to attack our computers.

Chris Evans, 13th October 2008.

Did we get it right, Love?

January 2000

Did we get it right, Love?

Did we get it right?

*Is the world a little better for our having
passed this way?*

*Will they remember us with gratitude when we
have gone our way?*

*When scores are counted, chips are cashed,
When hopes are realised or dashed,
Did we get it right?*

Has the vision kept its promise, Love?

The vision kept its promise?

*The thing we saw before us when we
made our youthful choice*

*That our lives could make a difference, we
could somehow find a voice –*

We followed it so faithfully,

It led us far, it kept us free,

But has the vision kept its promise?

Introduction

*Did we back the winning horse, Love?
Did we back the winning horse?
We backed the horse that gave us what we
needed on the way.*

*We staked our lives upon it, and it
handsomely did pay.*

*Perhaps not how we thought it would,
The odds were high, the pay-out good.
I'd gladly place the self-same bet today.*

*But did we get it right, Love?
Did we really get it right?
There are things we both regret, there
may be times we were deceived
As we tried to live obedient to the best
that we believed.*

*But we can never count the score,
'Cause we are part of something more,
Far more than we could ever have conceived.*



The proposition

I first met a surprising number of my present-day friends and colleagues (not to mention Anne Vickers, whom I was to marry 11 years later) in the summers of 1965 and 1966, at Tirley Garth, a large country house in Cheshire, given to MRA by its owner. In both years, a summer camp for young people was held there with the intention of creating a musical show which could tour Britain.¹

Not quite 15, I arrived when it was in full swing. After the formal introductions I found myself talking to a Scot, a couple of years older than me.² He seemed to be very much at the heart of things, while I felt very much on the margin. I remember him grabbing my suitcase, and setting off with it across the huge lawn towards our accommodation, telling me as we went what I needed to know about the programme of the coming days. I was impressed by the contrast between this friendly acceptance and my experience at school. There, I found making friends was complicated – you had to watch your back!

Before long it seemed clear that the welcome and the friendship which I enjoyed so much was a kind of by-product of a proposition which these people were exploring, which resulted in a more positive attitude towards life and towards each other. I experienced it myself. Was it real or

1. The show, called *It's Our Country, Jack!*, did indeed tour Britain in 1966-67, although being still at school I was not much involved.

2. This was Rob Corcoran, now National Programme Director for IofC USA.

The proposition

imaginary? Temporary or permanent? Time, and experiment, would tell.

The proposition was this: 'If you want the world to be different, the place to start the process is with yourself.' Of course it led directly to questions, such as, 'In what way do I want the world to be different?', 'What changes should I make in myself?' and 'How?'

I remember very little discussion about the first of these. Perhaps few of us had strong feelings about how the world should be different, beyond a vague desire that it be less stuffy and restrictive. I did, however, want *my* world to be different, and I wanted to feel permanently as purposeful and energised as I did when I was at those summer camps.

What changes should I make in myself? Some of the others were able to tell colourful stories of turning points in their lives. This made it easy to imagine some dark corners of my own life I should look into. It also, for a surprisingly long time, caused me to doubt my own sincerity, since the changes I experienced were gradual and not without back-sliding, in contrast to the radical about-turns described by some others.

For those wanting to embark on a process of self-examination, a practical starting point was proposed – that we could measure our lives and actions against moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. We were encouraged to believe that God has a purpose for each of us to fulfil in the world, and that we could discover it, step by step, particularly through 'quiet times'.³

3. Anyone who encounters IofC today is likely to meet this same core proposition. 'Quiet times' are private times of quiet in which a person prayerfully searches their mind and imagination for any insight, realisation or possible call to action, which may come from an inspired source.

Did we get it right, Love?

For me, it was the bit about God's purpose, with the promise that it can give meaning to all of life, which was most attractive. It still is.

Rich man's Sunday

*Imagine a land without hunger
With no wars, dereliction or pain.
Where life is one long, sunny Sunday,
With boredom, some sport, and then
boredom again.*

*Give me a land full of problems,
With something that shouts to be done.
Then I will know what I'm here for.
And then even Sundays are fun.*

Even in those days, we knew that this proposition was counter-culture, and would take a lot of explaining outside the group of people we were with at the time. This was a big concern, as other people's opinion was very important to me. But we heard how thousands of people like us around the world were also responding to it, we could tell it was spiritually powerful, and I felt by instinct that it was right.

I think most of us approached it like children on their first visit to a swimming pool. We did not question that there was water in the pool, or that other people seemed to enjoy it. But we certainly asked ourselves how cold it was and whether we wanted to take the risk of plunging in ourselves.

Proposition accepted

How do you set about changing yourself?

How indeed! It's still an ongoing process. So far the most useful answer for me has been, 'one step at a time'. Wherever we are in the process, or whatever we are up against, there is always a next step.

I quickly found that private decisions to 'do better next time' or to 'turn over a new leaf' were no match for the arrayed forces of circumstance and human nature.

I knew I was looking for what in Christianity we call 'grace' – that divine dispensation which allows us to defy the gravitational pull of human nature. It is not automatic, like a slot machine – feed in a prayer and a packet of grace falls onto the tray. It is a gift, which usually comes in small packages and is never fully under our control. But the packages have a cumulative effect (sometimes called 'spiritual growth') and there seem to be things we can do to put ourselves in the way of them.

I discovered, for example, the value of confiding in one or two people I really trust. As I tried to seek a way forward, the conviction began to form that I should confide in my father about some aspects of my life which I was trying to change. I was sure he had no idea about them, and I felt this amounted to a kind of double life, one half of which was on display, the other strictly private. There were no particularly interesting or dramatic misdemeanours involved, but it was important and real enough to me.

I loved my father, but there were lots of people it would have been easier to talk with about such things. However, the conviction persisted, and I felt that either the whole

Did we get it right, Love?

project was over or I had to go through with it. So after much prevarication, I found him in his study, and, feeling alarmingly weak at the knees, asked if we could talk.

Quite unable to explain why I was there, I more or less started the conversation by reading out the notes I had scribbled about what I needed to tell him. Dad, who was more interested in why I was doing it than in the detail of what I had to reveal, responded wonderfully. I came out of that conversation with such a spring in my step I could almost fly – and my father and I started to become spontaneous friends.

Apology and restitution can also open the door to grace. The admission to the person affected that ‘I was wrong’ does damage to the edifice of defensive pride and makes it harder to repeat the offence. It can also start off a chain reaction of positive change. I know a businessman who has been able to challenge the corruption at the heart of a major industry because he first paid back to the government a six-figure sum in evaded taxes.

But when all is said and done, I found, and still find, the surest way to grace, like happiness, is to be occupied with other people and their needs.

And it is encouraging how often the next step in our own inner process, however halting, turns out also to be the next step in the external process of encouraging change around us.

I began to discover this back at school, where my efforts to explain the new direction I was trying to take, and the reasons for it, did not seem to make any immediate impact.

However, before long I had to risk angering a group of friends whose opinions mattered to me. It was over an incident of low-level bullying, and although I was worried that

The proposition

*At first I knew I ought to
But wasn't sure I would.
And then I felt I wanted to
But didn't think I could.
But other people needed help
And then I understood;
Forgetting all about yourself's
The best way to be good!*

I might become the next victim, I had to blurt out my opposition. The moment passed without further punishment for the unfortunate lad who was being picked on, although I was assured there would be consequences for me.

The only consequence I was aware of came some months later as I was talking with one of the instigators of that incident. He was a brilliant rugby player, and suddenly he began telling me how utterly depressed he was after a back injury meant that he could play no rugby that season. Referring back to the incident, he said, 'I think there is something different in your life, and I need something now. Can you tell me more about it?'

For the next two or three years we became the closest of friends as we explored what it meant to seek God's will in a school context. I think that together we had some influence in the school, but above all I remember with gratitude the sense of support and confirmation that came from this unexpected alliance. I regret that we went our separate ways in the years that followed and lost touch.

India

Armed with our experience at Tirley Garth, the first steps in changing our own lives and the knowledge that we were not doing this all alone, we went out into our schools, universities or jobs. Some toured with a musical show they had written which put across the ideas we were exploring. I finished off my schooling and went to work on a farm in a gap year, since agriculture was my chosen career.

Towards the end of my gap year, I met up again with the musical touring group, who had meanwhile been invited to India. To my surprise, and secret delight, I was invited to go with them. But what about university? I was enrolled for a degree course in agriculture at Reading University in two months' time, and my parents were understandably doubtful about my missing it. Whatever misgivings he may have had, my father accompanied me to an interview at the university, where they offered to keep a place for me after a second gap year. I was free to go to India.

In fact, I never got to university at all. Faced, the following year, with the choice of continuing the work I was then doing or returning to study, I decided after much agonising to keep working.

The agonising was not so much because of the career risk involved in not doing further studies. It was the first time I was faced with a more or less irreversible life choice. I genuinely wanted to follow God's will; but how could I find out what that was? Pray and search as I might, I was

Did we get it right, Love?

unable to reach a decision. I had a mental picture of my life approaching a crossroads, and if I missed my way, I would be for ever on the wrong track.

This was resolved partly through a chance conversation with an Indian political leader called Stanley Nichols-Roy.¹ He listened gravely to my personal dilemma, and said something like, 'I think you should decide one way or the other, and then never question it again.' At the time I thought he was a bit cavalier about it. Perhaps he was, but it was what I needed to hear. I started to see that God's plan was not dependent on my making the right choice, and I came to believe that He was less interested in what I decided than in why I decided it.

Have I ever regretted passing up the chance of further studies? No, I haven't. Maybe it was less of a risk than it sounds. Since my family is lucky enough to own a farm, I knew I could probably still go into farming at a later date. In fact I did in 1976-78, but temporarily.

I do, however, feel that I should have got more training later, when it came to taking on professional responsibilities. For example, I have spent years as treasurer of charitable organisations without any formal training in finance or accounts, though of course I picked up quite a lot of knowledge and some skills along the way. I think I may belong to the last generation when such a thing was possible. But was it advisable? Probably not. Looking back, I can think of times when I had opportunities for such training, but was too focussed on the job in hand to take them up.

So, India became my university. I arrived having just turned 19, and returned home aged 22, more confident and with a vastly changed view of the world.

1. See also later in this chapter.

Poverty

We arrived at Mumbai in October 1969 – seventy Europeans in a rush of curiosity and hopeful expectation, with our musical revue, *Anything to Declare?* The title alluded to an imaginary customs officer asking us as we left our continent whether we had anything of value to bring to the rest of the world.

Rajmohan Gandhi,² grandson of the Mahatma, was leading an ambitious campaign to ‘build a clean, strong, united India’. He had launched a weekly magazine called *Himmat*, which means ‘courage’, and was building a large conference and training centre at Panchgani, not far from Pune. It was he who invited *Anything to Declare?* as part of this public campaign. Perhaps he also hoped that it would help us to become broader and more global in our approach.

India certainly did that for me. I had never encountered poverty before. Until that first journey into Mumbai from the airport, past mile after mile of slums, I had no idea what it looked like, sounded like, smelt like. It was distressing, of course, but also motivating. I have never since had a moment’s doubt that the world badly needs to change. And I came to have a huge respect for those who make a life for themselves in such surroundings.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, socialism was in the intellectual ascendant, certainly among the young people I mixed with. We railed against a system which allowed the kind of poverty that I was now witnessing for the first time, alongside the ostentatious wealth of a few. It wasn’t fair.

2. Rajmohan is now President of the IofC International Association.

Did we get it right, Love?

I was uncomfortably reminded of this when people would take a delight in the fact that I grew up playing cricket (an outdoor sport) inside our family home. 'Is your house that big?' was a typical, wide-eyed response. Well, yes it was³ – although it was also full of heavy Victorian furniture which was virtually unbreakable, and we only used a tennis ball. However, it made a good talking-point.

It also marked me out as coming from a background of privilege that felt at odds with what I wanted to see in society.

Could I with integrity continue to advocate a fairer society when my own background felt like a denial of that fairness?

We were lucky to be working alongside Indians who could interpret for us what we were seeing in their country, and what might be done about it. They were concerned to challenge the rich, not to become poor, but to create conditions in which the poor could lift themselves. Seen in this light, a privileged background appeared not as a door to unmerited ease, but as something to be put to good use. My short-lived identity crisis started to abate.

Apart from my on-stage role, which was minor, my main task with the travelling group was to help organise transport. For international journeys, with 70-80 people, it was usually a choice between chartering a Boeing 707 or block-booking seats on a scheduled flight. But within India we travelled mostly by rail, including a memorable two-and-a-half day journey from Delhi to Shillong in India's North East.

It was in Shillong, which was at the time capital of two states – Assam and Meghalaya – that we witnessed at first hand the drama of a war that never happened. It was avoided

3. Today, there are 22 apartments and several function rooms within what used to be our family home.

through a change in people's attitudes and relationships in a classic example of what would now be called 'conflict prevention'.

The war that never happened

Today, Meghalaya is a mountainous state within India, a small one (population around 2.5 million) and not a very developed one. Most of its people are from the Khasi and Garo tribes, who are Christian and racially distinct from most Indians. In the 1960s, it was a part of the larger state of Assam, which has a Hindu majority and lots of natural resources. Resentment was in the air. The All Party Hill Leaders Conference was pushing for the Khasi and Garo people to secede from both Assam and India, with wide popular support. Its General Secretary, Stanley Nichols-Roy, was in an impossible situation, torn between the hot-heads in his own movement and an unyielding and often high-handed Indian government far away in Delhi. Many of its radical leaders were planning violent insurrection and arms were flowing into the area. Commentators confidently predicted the worst.

By the time we arrived in the spring of 1970, things were different. We witnessed the inauguration by Indira Gandhi of the 'semi-autonomous Hill State of Meghalaya', in front of a cheering crowd of 100,000 people.⁴

Nichols-Roy became its Minister for Industries.

It was from him that we heard much of the inside story of how this came about. It was a complex process, involving many agencies, but I will outline what struck me at the time because of its effect on me, and I think many of us who were there.

4. In 1972 Meghalaya achieved full statehood within India.

Did we get it right, Love?

A few years before, Nichols-Roy, feeling torn between his passion for independence for his people and his understanding of how devastating a war with India could be, met some people involved in MRA. They talked of situations elsewhere in the world where deep changes of attitude between hostile individuals and even whole populations had taken place – notably between post-war Germany and France. And they encouraged him to look for places where changes in his own attitudes might set the ball rolling in a better direction.

It may not have been what his new friends expected, but Nichols-Roy knew that the first place this was needed was not in politics but in his family. He was a committed Christian, and knew that he needed an honest talk with his wife, Helen, and a fresh start with her.

While wrestling with this challenge, he heard a medical student⁵ describe how she had found the courage to have a difficult talk with her father. 'If she can do that,' he thought, 'so can I.' And he did. Helen told us she was so elated that she 'went round Shillong smiling and waving to complete strangers'.

Of course, as we listened to this, we identified at once with the medical student whose personal act of courage, so insignificant in one sense, had had such a wide effect.

With his family life on the way to restoration, Nichols-Roy's thoughts turned to the political situation. There, too, there were fences to be mended, not least with a political adversary, the long-serving Chief Minister of Assam, B P Chaliha. At the time they were both public figures at the height of their power, so it is understandable that less was related to us about these conversations. But it was clear that they were

5. Her name was Nyanam Kanagasabai. She is now Dr Nyanam Cleasby.

India

about Nichols-Roy's attitude to the man, and not his political convictions. Chaliha said, 'He used to be hard. He used to be stubborn. I am so impressed with his change that I am now prepared to work unitedly with him.'

This new trust enabled them to develop compromise proposals which carried popular support and left the men of violence isolated. This all happened before *Anything to Declare?* arrived in Shillong, and it was the inauguration of their compromise solution which we witnessed in April 1970. Chaliha is also on record as saying, 'Moral Re-Armament has changed the political climate of Assam. This is a fact. I speak as an administrator.'⁶

By 1971 we had performed in eight Indian cities, and also made a six-month tour through Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Hong Kong and Singapore, and back to India. In Malaysia, our visit was at government invitation, timed for the anniversary of the 1969 race riots. Some senior people in government had experienced reconciliation across the Malay-Chinese divide as a result of their contact with MRA. Their hope was that the message of change and unity in diversity carried by *Anything to Declare?* could help calm emotions and reduce the chances of a recurrence of the rioting. There was no recurrence, though what if anything we contributed, I cannot say.

Each new country was fascinating, and left its impression on us, but I will focus on India, where I stayed when the rest of the show returned to Europe, via Iran.

6. For a brief account of the background, see pages 14 & 15 of *War Prevention Works – 50 stories of people resolving conflict*, published by the Oxford Research Group – www.oxfordresearchgroup.org. (The Oxford Research Group has no connection with The Oxford Group, the name by which IofC was originally known in the 1930s.)

Living in India

When the time came for *Anything to Declare?* to return to Europe a few, including me, were invited to stay on in India, to follow up the contacts that had been made. I stood at Delhi airport, saying good-bye to the friends I had travelled with for over a year – and, since rupees were no use to them where they were going, I received more loose change as they boarded the plane than I could possibly fit in my pockets! Over the next two days, the Indians and others who had stayed behind left for different parts of the sub-continent. I had no plans to go anywhere else, and found myself the sole occupant of a house belonging to MRA in Delhi, complete with a driver, a cook, a bearer⁷ and a cleaner. This was my home for the next 18 months.

I had a few names and addresses of people in Delhi who had seen *Anything to Declare?*, but no-one told me what to do or suggested any goals that I should work towards. I think today we might consider this bad man-management, but that didn't occur to me at the time. I assumed it was my job to work out some goals of my own – and in the event I was only on my own for a few weeks.

The goals that emerged were simple enough: to follow up individuals and groups in Delhi and the surrounding region who had become interested in what MRA was doing, to support a group of Harijans (formerly 'Untouchables') who had transformed a slum area very close to the house I stayed in, and to take every chance to talk to people about MRA's ideas and the work it was doing.

7. The bearer was the most senior of the staff, not unlike a butler.

India

The Harijans were an important part of my education. All of them were poor and most illiterate, and despite laws which forbade it, they were victims of systematic discrimination from higher castes. They lived together in a 'colony', which was reputed to be the biggest of its kind in Delhi. After watching me for a while, they generously took this un-streetwise young Englishman into their confidence and their homes, which in many cases were made of corrugated iron sheeting.⁸ Many of them were young men, also, and we became friends, using a rather tortured blend of English and Hindi.

I admired their track record. Their colony used to have an evil reputation, particularly for illegal home-made (and often lethal) liquor. It had been a no-go area for the police. As a group of them began to get their own lives sorted out and end the violent feuds among themselves, they found they had enough influence to run the bootleggers out of the area. Many families started to function again. They started an informal school so that the youngsters could have better chances in life.⁹ All this they had done before I arrived. I would take visitors, sometimes from other parts of the world, to see them, holding long, translated discussions while sitting on 'charpoys' (string beds) under a tin roof, surrounded by children, dogs and the occasional pig. Nailed up on a wooden post was a small sign in English and Hindi – 'MRA Office'. For a while a group of us went together each week to a different Harijan colony in Delhi showing an MRA feature film, dubbed into Hindi, to large outdoor audiences.

8. I was not the first Englishman they got to know, but followed in the footsteps of Philip Tyndale-Biscoe, a gifted linguist and actor who now lives in Sweden.

9. In 2007 I was able to go back and look up some of my old friends. They took immense pride in the number of their children who had made it to college, an achievement way out of reach of their own generation.

Did we get it right, Love?

I also became aware of the hard realities they lived with. One day, one of the children had an infection, and I realised his parents were having to choose between medicine or food that day, as they couldn't buy both. The last thing they wanted from me was money – I think they sensed that it would immediately change the relationship. I hope I was of some support to them in other ways. They certainly taught me a lot.

The town of Hissar, north-east of Delhi, provided both work and incident. I made frequent visits there to support a group of students and lecturers at the Haryana Agricultural University who were promoting MRA ideas in the area. As well as holding meetings, they mounted a stage play in Hindi in cooperation with workers and management from the nearby textile mill. The play carried a strong and at times amusing message about the causes and cures of bad industrial relations.

On my first visit there I found the university in uproar, with most of the students on strike. Since the Vice Chancellor had been enthusiastic about *Anything to Declare?*, I had an entrée to him, and was asked if I would act as an intermediary. I was whisked around the back streets on a motorbike, blind-folded so that I could not find the place again, and finally ushered into the presence of the student strike committee. It turned out that they wanted a concession which would enable them to call the strike off. I duly reported this to the Vice Chancellor, an imposing and very senior civil servant. 'Did you know,' he told me, 'that before independence I once put Indira Gandhi in gaol? If I made no concessions to her, I certainly won't make any to a group of students. They have to come to me and withdraw their demands.' In the end, I think they did.

India

Some months later, amid the fevered atmosphere of the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, I made another visit. I was met at the bus stop as usual by my host and colleague,¹⁰ but he looked concerned. 'You have to go back,' he told me. 'People are accusing you of working for the CIA, and I have been warned that if you are seen here, you and I will both be beaten up.' I caught the next bus back to Delhi.

Often it is hard to tell whether an apparently isolated incident is in fact much more than that. Did the transformation of one of Delhi's Harijan colonies have wider implications in how poverty or caste discrimination were addressed? Or, take the effect of MRA's work with some members of the Naxalite movement – a violent movement of broadly Maoist persuasion. When three young Naxalites handed in their murderous knives to a Canadian lady¹¹ because they had turned from violence to another way of changing society, was this important only to them and a few witnesses? Or was it a significant step in a generation's move from hatred towards compassion?

We may never know, but for me and many others, these were cameo examples which we hoped and fully intended to replicate. And there is no denying that the history of North East India, for all its intractable difficulties, has been more peaceful as a result of those events in Meghalaya. If this was my 'university education', I think I was fortunate.

10. This was Deepak Mullick, now Managing Director of a pharmaceutical and bio-tech company, who has run courses in corporate responsibility and ethical business for thousands of business school students.

11. Her name was Kate Cross, and the lads adopted her as their 'grandmother'. So far as I am aware, the knives are still used for cutting vegetables at the IofC conference and training centre in Panchgani.

Did we get it right, Love?

Christmas morning at Panchgani

*Below us in the valley where the smoke chill lies,
Beneath the glower of the mountains and the
pink and golden skies,
A million blanket-shrouded figures set about
their daily fight
Unaware that their Christ Jesus has been born
on Christmas night.*

*Around the hillside's shoulder on the slanting-
sunlit street,
With a murmured 'Happy Christmas' to the
strangers that you meet,
Through the heavy-lidded township that is
stirring into life
To a little, red and tin-roof church
to celebrate His birth.*

A plaque on Panchgani church wall reads:

'Rupert Thomas Rees Jones, 5 yrs 3 months, was laid to rest in Panchgani cemetery on 7th October, 1933. He was a pupil of the European Boys' High School, Panchgani. 'He took them up in his arms and blessed them.'

*Rupert Thomas Jones was a little boy of five,
Full of energy and dirty knees, and very much alive.
It was nineteen thirty-three when he began his short career
At the European High School,
in the springtime of the year.*

India

*The summer sun it laid him low.
The monsoon brought disease.
He was buried in October underneath the
banyan trees.
It was a year of great events – of Hitler's rise to power,
The Depression closed its steely grip,
the Freedom Movement flowered.*

*But to Rupert's stricken parents these things
mattered not a jot
Beside the little mound of brick-red earth in a
simple burial plot.
So their grief was set in copper, and was fixed
above my pew
So that when I think of great events,
I'll think of Rupert too.
And below us in the valley Mother India awakes.
From black she turns to green and gold,
and shimmers off the lake.
Unnumbered millions destined to plough
and sow and reap.
Unnumbered hearts as sensitive to sorrow,
eyes to weep.
No plaques record their passing in the fullness
of His time,
Nor mark a grief as deep as Rupert's,
joy as great as mine.*



'Us and them'

My brother, Bill, was there to meet me when I landed at Heathrow airport. I was in need of a holiday, and speaking, so I was told, with a pronounced Indian accent. Then home on the train, to where my parents were waiting. The holiday followed soon after. Bill and I spent a memorable 10 days in South Wales, with his little van serving as both transport and accommodation. I remember talking, fishing, and strenuous exercise on various Welsh beaches. Much as I loved India, it was great to be back!

But I was also keen to apply in my own country what I felt I had learned, and my expectation was that this would mean getting involved with the programme of MRA in Britain. The part that interested me most was in industry and the economy – an area where an earlier generation of MRA was extremely active.

The British economy, its glory days far in the past, was by 1972 widely regarded as a basket case. Many industrial units were battlefields in a costly and sometimes vicious struggle between management and labour. Largely as a result, productivity was falling far behind our competitors, and organised labour seemed to be in constant conflict with governments of whatever party.

I needed to meet people, and try to understand what was behind all this. It was easy to find people who felt bitter about the years of unemployment in the 1930s and their own powerlessness in the face of a system which served

'Us and them'

'them' – that is people of privilege and capital. There was no denying the reality of the experiences on which this feeling was based, nor, I felt, the justice of their cause at its best. However, it often showed itself in a determination to get an ever larger share of the cake, at any cost. For others, the whole system needed to be destroyed, and then somehow rebuilt.

In some circles there was cynicism and even despair that as a nation we were wasting our opportunities by our in-fighting. Many who felt this way would blame others for starting the fight and perpetuating it, while they themselves enjoyed a level of status or comfort which they would fiercely defend if challenged. We were a society divided into 'us' and 'them', along class lines.

MRA maintained that the class war was wrong and destructive, that it was based around hatred, and was not a way forward for this or any other country. Instead we promoted the idea of a change in everyone's attitudes and relationships. Our most effective advocates were those, from whatever background, who had themselves undergone such a change. We would point to improved working conditions, productivity and industrial relations in the factories, docks and coalfields where their influence was felt. Plays at the Westminster Theatre and elsewhere were used more or less constantly to portray the importance of a change in attitude, and in particular its spiritual dimension.¹

This approach quite often brought us into conflict with those who believed in class war as a means to social justice. Since they were mostly on the political left, we would often find ourselves under attack for belonging to the political right. This accusation was untrue. Our political views were

1. MRA bought The Westminster Theatre in central London in 1946, and used it as a means to reach the public with ideas as well as drama.

Did we get it right, Love?

spread right across the democratic spectrum. But there were times when MRA, along with many others, strongly opposed what appeared to us as anti-democratic strategies, and in a polarised situation this was sometimes interpreted as anti-communist or 'right wing'.

More seriously, I think we sometimes allowed our suspicion about a global anti-democratic strategy to temper our support for those who fought for justice, for fear they were being used by those with more calculating motives. These days we all admire Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, but I remember searching discussions about whether their righteous anger was not in reality promoting the kind of bitterness on which class war thrives.

We, of course, evaluated our position from our knowledge of what motivated us. Others, understandably, evaluated it from things that we said or wrote, and in many cases from what they heard from third parties. At times MRA was heavily and publicly attacked.

Anyone who sets out to change things that are wrong, and challenges vested interests, can expect to be attacked. But were we attacked for what we did wrong? Or for what we did right?

There were certainly those who understood very well what we were trying to do and who spread misinformation in order to oppose it. We assumed their motives were either ideological or moral or both. But looking back, we should perhaps have done more to answer this misinformation, from which many people inevitably drew the wrong conclusions.

One handicap we could not avoid was an own goal, scored years earlier by Frank Buchman himself, the founder of MRA. In 1936 he had given an interview in which he report-

edly said, 'Thank heaven for a man like Hitler who has built up a front line of defence against the anti-Christ of communism.' Some reasons have been put forward for why he may have said it.² The most credible to me is that, in the period before the evil of Hitler's regime was fully understood, Buchman thought his supporters in Germany had a chance of influencing either Hitler himself or some in his circle. If this was the case, it would be quite characteristic of Buchman to express a vision for what Hitler might become if he were to change for the better. But what a sound-bite! Buchman must have regretted it, and it has been used as a stick to beat him and his movement ever since.³

It was a PR blunder. But too few of those who judged Buchman by this one sentence took the trouble to find out whether it was in any way representative of what the man really stood for. His remarkable record, and the opinion of those who knew him well, confirm that whatever was in his mind that day it was not support for Nazism. Within a few years, many of the young men who had worked with him were fighting in the allied armies. Some were killed in action.

I never met Buchman, and even in the 1970s all this seemed a long time ago, but I mention it because it still has an influence on IofC and its public profile.

2. See *Frank Buchman – a Life*, Buchman's biography by Garth Lean, and also 'Moral Re-Armament' on Wikipedia.

3. This episode understandably cast a pall over MRA's relations with Jewish communities in some of the countries where it was active. Now, thankfully, this has, by and large, been overcome.

Did we get it right, Love?

December 1973

Prime Minister Heath went on prime time television to warn of the chaos that could follow a threatened coalminers' strike. I watched the broadcast in the home of a friend who worked on the assembly line in the Ford factory in Dagenham, with his family.

*The picture fades, the box reverts
To advertising slogans.
With troubled eyes the family sit
In silence for a moment.*

*Grandma stares, her eyes unseeing,
Breath quite slow and hands unfeeling,
Thinking, thinking, scarce believing;
Mind cast back a generation
To a bleeding, hungry nation.
To morning papers damp with mist,
The searching through the stricken list
Of men killed fighting far away,
As memory stumbles on the day
She found her son among them.*

*In the armchair father slouches.
Tired eyes and ringed with pouches,
Papers crumpled in his hand.
Imagination's eye a land
Of sad depression views.
Of stamping feet in wintry queues
And whistling wind in chimney flues
Whence fire had long time fled.*

*Where city streets marched line on line,
Once glittering, impressive, fine,
But now are fallen – gone their shine
As winter leaves are shed.*

'Us and them'

*Thus each within their fancy stirs,
Drinking of fears of future years.
Advertisements are scarcely seen
Till next is summoned to the screen
A story set in Palestine
Two thousand years ago.
The image pierces to the heart
Recapturing the errant thought
Which thus recalled can but behold
A scene two thousand winters old.*

*The Christmas cards have got it wrong.
The straw is wet, the smell is strong.
No bright white clothes in which to dress,
But comfort little, prospects less,
And yet the scene is happy. Yes,
And radiantly so.
For all the poverty and pain,
For all the nation's children slain,
Our Lord was come to earth again,
Two thousand years ago.
In spite of all that men could do.
Despised by all, save but a few,
Despite his death at thirty-two,
There lies our chance to start anew,
As to His side we go.*

*And crises come and crises go
But still the Christ-child waits to know
When human hearts so cold and slow
Will turn to him, and he can show
His majesty on earth.*

Did we get it right, Love?

Some people, including many in MRA, detected a guiding hand behind Britain's industrial conflicts. For them, we were witnessing a bid to provoke class warfare, with much of the strategy dictated by Moscow's efforts to export communism and weaken capitalism.

I hope that before long it will be possible for historians to carry out objective research, to establish to what extent this was true.

Some scoffed at it, accusing those who thought that way as 'seeing Reds under every bed'. But I met a number of people who confirmed that they were indeed engaged in such a struggle, and I came to accept that it was a real element in the situation, even if most were neither conscious of it nor motivated by it.

Les Dennison was such a man. Les came from Coventry and was a trade unionist and a skilled plumber. He used to tell us how, as a committed Communist Party member he would receive instructions about where he should work and even where he and his family should live, based on where he could create the greatest disruption in the construction industry. Like many others who eventually left their ranks, he rated the influence and danger of the Communist Party very highly.

Another, from whom I learnt much, was Bill Taylor, a short, slightly tubby man from Birmingham, who worked at the giant Longbridge car assembly plant of what was then the British Leyland Corporation. While Les came across as intense and highly trained, Bill was big-hearted and talkative. He was a sheet metal worker, and shop steward⁴ – no communist, but a natural leader with a passion for social

4. Shop steward is a name for a local trade union representative, elected by their fellow-workers. A large factory would have many shop stewards, drawn from several different, and competing, trade unions.

justice. His nickname at Longbridge was Burglar Bill, which referred to an incident in his youth when he was arrested on his way home from work because his sheet-metal worker's tool bag looked like equipment for a burglary.

Often it was unclear whether the plant at Longbridge, and others like it, was under the control of its management or the workers. Shop stewards like Bill could demand conditions for those they represented which had a huge impact on production and cost levels, for example, and could easily find a grievance on which to bring men out on strike if challenged by management. Some used this power well, others used it to advance their own influence or to 'smash the system'. In such cases the company inevitably suffered.

Bill was one of a number who came to recognise that they had on occasion damaged their industry by misusing this power. As he began to explore the things in his own life which made him at times a destructive influence, his colleagues noticed a change in his language. Some of them began to call him Bishop Bill rather than Burglar Bill.

His greatest moment, to my mind, came in 1974 after the Irish Republican Army atrocity known as the Birmingham Pub Bombings. Twenty-one people were killed and hundreds injured when bombs exploded in two crowded pubs. Next morning the mood at Longbridge, where many employees had lost relatives, was murderous. Most Irish employees had stayed at home, and there were calls for revenge on Irish homes in that part of town. Groups of men began to gather into an ugly crowd. The Convener of shop stewards⁵ was used to dealing with crowds, but his speciality was to inflame passions not calm them. He asked Bill to take the situation in hand.

5. His name was Dick Etheridge.

Did we get it right, Love?

Bill's first reaction, he told us later, was to refuse. He had no idea what to do either. But he knew something had to be done, so he seized the microphone and announced a silent march around that enormous factory, in memory of those who had lost their lives. Not many cars were built that morning as the men walked from one part of the plant to another, being joined by others all the time, until thousands were assembled, waiting to hear from Bill. He found himself launching into the Lord's Prayer over the PA system. 'I couldn't remember the words beyond the first line, but I just felt that was what ought to be said.' Each line of the prayer came to him from somewhere in his subconscious, where it had lain untouched since his childhood, and by the time his lone voice had been joined by the murmur of hundreds of others joining in, the mood for revenge had gone.

Les, Bill and many others like them risked misunderstanding in a polarised industrial setting by offering leadership based not on 'us against them' but on their understanding of what was right for their industry. 'It's not who is right, but what is right' was one of their slogans. Some of what they fought for seemed to be swept away a few years later by the avalanche of Thatcherite ideas and legislation, but they played a crucial role.

Without them the birth of New Labour in the years that followed might have had insufficient support from the trade unions. And without them, Nissan, Toyota and Honda might not have had the confidence in their potential British workforce to build car assembly plants in Britain, thereby keeping the UK car industry alive, even though foreign-owned. I took part in conversations with the Japanese research teams, and their main focus was to know whether they could expect a constructive or a destructive attitude in their British workforce if they invested here.

'Us and them'

My own role was never more than on the margins, but we took pride in the contributions made by these people. And it gives me pleasure that there are plants still working which would have closed had it not been for changes we helped to bring about.⁶

6. See (if you can get hold of a copy) *Industry at its Best*, compiled by Bert Reynolds and published in 1991 by Industrial Pioneer Publications.

Try politics?

How do you make a difference in your own country? Getting involved in politics seemed one possibility.

Belonging to a political party has always seemed to me like a form of tribal loyalty. You may not agree with all that your party says and does, but it is still your party. If I belonged to any tribe in this sense, it was to the Conservatives. And so in 1974 I joined The Bow Group. (Not The Beau Group as many mis-spell it, mostly deliberately!)

The Bow Group calls itself 'the oldest – and one of the most influential – centre-right Think-Tank in Britain. The Group exists to develop policy, publish research and stimulate debate within the Conservative Party. It has no corporate view, but represents all strands of Conservative opinion.'

For many it is an interesting way to be involved, however peripherally, in developing ideas and policies. For the more determined and ambitious it serves as a rung near the bottom of the ladder to political advancement.

Anyone can join, and I am not aware of any checks made on my background or suitability when I joined. It must surely be different now.

I started attending meetings in the Parliament building when well-known speakers would address an audience of 30–40 members. If you were enthusiastic enough, you could put your name down (along with a generous payment for your meal) to join a much smaller group who had supper with the speaker afterwards.

Try politics?

Immediately, I met the fear of speaking in public in front of a competitive and critical audience. It was real and visceral. But it diminished with practice, and also when I realised that most people were so preoccupied with the impression they were making that they had little time to pass judgement on my performance.

I watched some people's political views move noticeably to the right when Mrs Thatcher became Conservative Party leader in place of Mr Heath. Was this, I wondered, a legitimate change of opinion or a calculated alignment with those who could advance their career? Perhaps a bit of both.

On one occasion a leading member of The Bow Group experienced an evangelical conversion, and promptly resigned.¹ This caused a palpable sense of shock, and two special meetings were held, I think to persuade him not to go. Inevitably they turned into a debate about his new-found convictions.

Although I was not sure why finding a faith was a reason to resign, I did my best to offer him support both in the meetings and around the bar afterwards, and we became rather good friends. In spite of the special meetings, he left The Bow Group.

I began to write pieces for The Bow Group magazine, and in the early years of the Thatcher government, when it seemed that the economy was in a free-fall that might not stop, I joined two others in writing a policy paper on unemployment. We called it 'Unemployment micro-solutions – the individual's response to a macro-economic problem'. It brought together several of the case studies I had learned

1. His name was Alan Craig. Recently I heard of him again when he stood in the election for Mayor of London, though not on a platform which stood a chance of winning.

Did we get it right, Love?

about from friends in industry, including those mentioned in the previous chapter. One of our key phrases in addressing a crisis of rising unemployment was, 'No-one can do everything, but everyone can do something.'

I think at the time it was quite widely read, with a press launching, a report in the *Financial Times* and commendation from Sir John Harvey-Jones, then Chairman of ICI. I suppose it was the peak of my political 'career'.

For a number of reasons, I felt I should not take it further – even if I was able to, which is far from clear.

Some reasons were entirely practical – in 1982 I moved out of London to Cheshire, where there were fewer chances to be involved. Also, I saw people live with what seemed like an unrelenting pressure to be on good terms with people who could advance their career and to be seen in the right company. I was not at all sure I could manage that, nor that I would be any good at it.

Most fundamental of all, I started to feel that even those who reach the top of the 'greasy pole' usually have less power than it seems. They can choose whether to steer the vehicle of state on the left of the road, or on the right, or down the middle, but they have little choice but to stick to the road. What if it doesn't lead in the right direction?

So with the rather grandiose notion that I was meant to help build new roads which did lead in the right direction, I drifted away from The Bow Group.

Since I only dabbled in it, I have no real experience of politics to evaluate. But I am left with a great respect for those who go into it to help change society, and admiration for those who are able to reach the top and keep their integrity. We rely on them. But to meet challenges like poverty, peace and climate change, they rely on us – the electorate – just as much.

Try politics?

1977

*I sat in school and looked afar
At Future, glinting like a star.
Respected, monied, loved and wed
I'd follow where its shining led,
To life's achievement by whose fame
My children's children knew my name.*

*I left the school. That future came.
But yet the star was just the same.
Still glinting, beckoning far away,
Still hinting of great things one day.
At twenty-six my back is straight,
My stride is long towards that date.*

*Yet life when lived moves hour by hour.
Only our dreams leap to the star
As pulling, pushing, carting, turning,
Driving, scraping, cutting, burning,
Daily work moves slowly on;
Approaches, passes and is gone.*

*But what of those in seats of power
Who make decisions hour by hour,
Whose signature could launch a war,
Whose word can make their fancy law –
Do they but dream the same as me
Of fitful, far-off destiny?*

*I feel assured that it is so,
For as years pass and old we grow
We march on still, with shortening tread,*

Did we get it right, Love?

*Towards some climax still ahead.
And as we near the journey's end
Still glints that star from round the bend.*

*At times we linger, looking back
At life, our winding, mounting track.
Strength is not left us, nor is time
To reach the purpose of our climb.
But still that star it does not lie.
We reach it, surely, as we die.*

Business and the economy

Les Dennison, Bill Taylor and others of the Labour Movement from whom I learned so much first questioned many of their assumptions about society after hearing businessmen and industrialists describe how their own attitudes had begun to change.¹ Not long after returning from India, I was surprised and encouraged to meet a group of such people who said they needed help – perhaps they had a shrewd idea of how to catch a young man’s attention! Some of them were very senior figures, including Frits Philips, then President of the Supervisory Board of Philips Industries in The Netherlands.

In those days, it was expected that students and workers would be interested in changing society, but not industrialists. Yet these men (they were, at that time, all men) wanted to invite their colleagues to a conference on ‘Industry’s role in building a new society’, and being extremely busy, they needed a small team to help them mount the conference. I gladly offered to help in any way I could, and found myself embarking on what became an important part of my life for the next 25 years.

About 300 people from business and industry duly arrived at Caux, Switzerland, the international conference centre of MRA, towards the end of August 1973. It was different from the earlier meetings I had been to there, when the emphasis had been on young people. The industrialists wanted to

1. One of these was John Vickers, who was shortly to become my father-in-law.

Did we get it right, Love?

establish that their conference was a professional meeting-place for business people, and it focussed on things they were concerned with – making the right investment decisions, choosing technologies which would help conserve energy, the value of good relationships at work. It was to become an annual fixture. This series of conferences and other activities is nowadays known as Caux Initiatives for Business (CIB), and that is how I will refer to it from here on.

I remember few details of those early conferences, but year by year I and two or three others took part in preparation meetings, and helped with the programme and logistics. I got to know the industrialists better, and they got to know me. Once or twice we argued when I found their approach to the world rather conservative. More often they would tolerate my youthful arrogance. One of them, most generously, offered me a year's training in his firm, to help me see the world from a more practical, industrial perspective. I am embarrassed now to think how quickly I turned him down, so sure was I that what I was already doing was more important.

It is hard to evaluate the effect of those conferences and the work that surrounded them. They attracted some of the big names of industry, with very senior people from Shell, General Motors, Exxon, Mitsubishi and Nissan. Toshiba sent regular labour-management delegations for 15 years in a row, valuing the new perspectives they returned with. We listened to the measured tones of Cardinal König of Vienna, proposing a 'world plan' for moral change, and the passion of Rev Leon Sullivan, preacher, civil rights leader, Director of General Motors, and author of the controversial Sullivan Principles for investment in South Africa. Perhaps we helped plant some seeds of what is now a widespread movement for business ethics and corporate social responsibility. I hope so.

Inspired by Leon Sullivan – 1987

*There was a boy lived in the west.
He was strong, he was tall, he was one of the best.
The folks around him didn't own much.
His home was poor, but his life was rich.
And his skin was black.
And he knew that it mattered, and he knew that it was good.
And it changed how he was treated, and the way he
understood.
There was injustice to be righted, if only he could – if he could.*

*He grew a man, he lived a life,
With lots of fun and plenty of strife.
His people saw he could lead them through.
He wasn't a saint, but he always knew
There's a God above
Who has loved his people since time began,
Who knew how they suffered and who must have a plan.
He would walk that road, he would be His man – be His man.*

*He saw his people as the years went by.
He saw them live and he saw them die.
How they wanted to work and had to be free.
How they wanted to live with dignity.
And his people rose.
And some didn't know till they turned on the light.
And some didn't care till they started to fight.
And step by step they walked out of the night – to the dawn.*

*In streets and prisons, factories, farms
They heard the preacher's call to arms -
To stand together hating none.
They had no weapons but still they won.
Their day had come.
And every door that opened, with a rising swell of pride,*

Did we get it right, Love?

*They could see across the threshold and were free to step inside;
Free to live the life that they had always been denied – free to live.*

The day has only just begun.

*As he stands on the ground that his people have won,
He looks from that height to a much longer view.*

In the distance they're his people too.

And he stretched right out

*To give hearts to those who hated, to give nerve to those who care,
Strength to those who waited and hope in their despair.*

*Only the Lord above and history can measure or compare
The fight he leads.*

Trade friction & the Caux Round Table

As the 1970s became the 1980s, trade frictions began to escalate, particularly between Japan on the one hand and the USA and Europe on the other, involving some of the very companies we had been working with. Japan was proving so successful at high quality mass production that western companies were losing jobs and exports. Many believed that Japanese competition was unfair, and international tensions started to surface. Those with long memories remembered the trade wars of the 1930s, which were one of the causes of World War II in the Pacific.

Frits Philips had gained widespread trust in Japanese industrial circles, partly through his decision to make Philips technology for cassette recorders globally available – a decision which had been to everyone's benefit. In 1985 he wrote a careful letter to a number of Japanese business leaders he knew personally, outlining his fears about the way things were going, and proposing that since their respective companies were at the heart of the problem they might be well placed to help bring solutions. Working with

Olivier Giscard d'Estaing,² he invited them to Caux for a private 'round-table' meeting with some of their counterparts from Europe and North America, not for negotiations but for conversations through which they could come to understand better each others' positions.

He met a ready response, and as a result, in 1986 we found ourselves running two conferences simultaneously at Caux – the regular Caux conference for business and industry, and the Caux Round Table.

The Japanese came in strength, with top management from Nissan, Canon, Sumitomo, Matsushita and Honda. They expected to meet understanding of their position. 'We thought we were coming to heaven,' said Mr Sakamoto, from Sumitomo Industries. What they heard in the first meeting was a robust challenge from western business leaders determined that the Japanese should understand what pain they were causing (as the westerners saw it). 'Then we found we were in hell,' complained Sakamoto.

The meeting broke up into regional groups. What would the Japanese do? Would they go home and report that, far from meeting with understanding, they had been subjected to 'Japan bashing'? We discovered later that some of the younger members of their group, who would not differ with their seniors in public, were arguing in private for greater efforts to understand the western participants, on the grounds that 'if we can't talk at Caux, we can't talk anywhere'. Meanwhile in the western group it was suggested that it might be constructive to admit that Europe and America deserved their share of blame as well.

The next meeting went much better, and gradually a principle was established that everyone could say exactly

2. Olivier Giscard d'Estaing was Vice Chairman of the famous INSEAD business school, and is brother of the former French President.

Did we get it right, Love?

what they thought about the situation, but then each group would trust the others to do what needed to be done in their own region – ‘to clean up our own back yard’, as one participant put it. Sakamoto declared himself ‘back in heaven’.

To their great credit, the Japanese went to work, gathering support for their ideas, and then publishing an open letter to their Prime Minister, Nakasone, calling for changes in economic policy in ways that would favour imports more than exports.

As subsequent annual meetings and other less formal contacts took place, the Chairman of Canon, Ryuzaburo Kaku, emerged as an outstanding leader. He had witnessed at first hand the destruction by atom bomb of Nagasaki – surviving because he and some others spent several days in an underground tunnel, only emerging when the worst of the radiation had gone. As a business leader he developed a philosophy of *kyosei*, which is roughly translated as ‘living and working together for the common good’. At the Caux Round Table and elsewhere, he would articulate how this should apply to international trade, replacing the driving motive of Japanese industry, which since 1946 had been to catch up with the West. In 1994 the Caux Round Table published its Principles for Business, which were for a long time the most widely published set of international business principles.³

By that time I was less involved,⁴ as I was concentrating on the general business and industry (CIB) conferences at Caux each summer.

3. See www.cauxroundtable.org

4. In 1989 I helped organise a visit by the Caux Round Table to India, in the early days of the opening up of its economy. Our programme included a visit to the Harijan Colony in Delhi, where these captains of industry sat on the floor of a tiny Hindu temple and listened to the stories of some of my old friends from the colony.

1990

*Busy, busy all the day;
No time to think or feel or pray.
'What must be done' came crowding in
And filled the space reserved within.
And when I cleared my hectic brain
To kneel in church, to change the strain,
Then back and back and back they came
The pressured thoughts, the old refrain
That things and things and things remain
Undone.*

*Is it addiction, sin or snare
That keeps me running like a hare?
In bursting diary, frantic pace,
I think at times I see His face,
When vivid moments, fleeting, shy,
Occur most unexpectedly;
Some sight or thought to damp the eye,
To spread a grin or plant a sigh
In full flood of activity,
Unsought.*

*The other day I wrote them down,
The thousand things as yet undone.
In silence offered up each one –
They were too heavy on my own.
I cannot claim they've gone away,
But they have lost the power to prey
On me, as things and things give way.
And less and less and less I pray
For rest, but more to busy stay
With Him.*

Making a difference

As well as running good, inspiring conferences, we tried to use them to address some of the issues of the day. For two or three years, for example, we tried to bring together bankers, development experts and leaders of heavily indebted developing economies. This built up some momentum, with Francis Blanchard, Director General of the ILO, participating, but eventually ran out of steam when we could not attract senior bankers.

However, former British Ambassador Bill Peters, one of those who had led these efforts, did not give up. He knew at first hand the impossible weight which debt interest and repayments placed on some of the countries he had worked in. In 1993 he took part in an MRA meeting in Britain on 'A New Economics', and there met Professor Martin Dent of Keele University. These two men, both in their '70s at the time, gathered a group of activists who launched the successful mass action, Jubilee 2000, which mobilised the political will to write off much of the debt of the poorest countries.⁵

Jubilee 2000, although partially deceived (along with citizens of the poorest countries) by governments who promised debt forgiveness and failed to deliver, brought about a change of policy in the G8 countries with regard to international debt. In some African countries governments can now afford to give children free schooling as a direct result. To my mind, it is one of the most inspiring examples of mass mobilisation in support of an unselfish

5. For the official report of Jubilee 2000, Google 'the world will never be the same again'.

policy.⁶ It was also a forerunner of the less-focussed 'Make Poverty History' campaigns.

Another development in which CIB figured was the launch in 1991 of the International Communications Forum. It describes itself as 'a growing world-wide network of media people who recognise that they have the power to influence society for good or ill and who want to play their part in building a less corrupt, less grubby-minded and infinitely more compassionate world'. The Forum has held regular meetings in partnership with the Caux conferences.⁷

Other significant moments were entirely unplanned. At the Caux conference in August 1989 there was a speaker from Kenya, named Washington Okumu. Huge and Harvard-educated, at the time he held a senior position in the United Nations Development Programme. To me, his speech was unremarkable, so I was dismayed to find that someone had invited him to speak again the next morning. What I did not know was that something had happened to Okumu overnight. He had come to Caux, he explained to the conference, burdened by disappointment. What he said was so unexpected that I made a transcript of it. Here are some extracts:

'I worked under somebody whom I was loyal to for eight years, and I got the leaders of Africa to trust him. Then he "stuck a knife in my back". I was really consumed with

6. Bill Peters later expressed disappointment that MRA had not formally joined the Jubilee 2000 coalition. At the time, we felt that our role was to promote changes in people's attitudes and motivation, and that this precluded involvement in a campaign aimed at changing policy, although many of us became involved as individuals. If we were given the chance again, I think we might reach a different conclusion. Bill was ahead of us in his thinking.

7. See www.icforum.org

Did we get it right, Love?

hatred. If you hate you carry a very heavy burden. It is difficult to forgive; I have struggled with this for five years.' He described how this hatred was colouring his reaction to world issues. 'I understand,' he continued, 'that this is a place where great reconciliation took place within this spirit one cannot come without undergoing ... a radical transformation of one's thinking. I would like to shed this burden.' He certainly looked and sounded happier and more convincing than the day before.

Time went by, and unknown to us, Okumu became a reconciler in African diplomacy. He is widely credited with facilitating the agreement by which Chief Buthelezi of Kwazulu joined the crucial South African elections in 1994 – when his refusal at the time seemed a major sticking-point in the progress towards majority rule, which could have led to violence.

Those of us who planned that conference five years before had no idea of any of this, of course. But it seems unlikely that Okumu could have played such a role in the state of mind in which he arrived at Caux. If the world is really to be changed for the better, analysis and strategies will, of course, be needed, but so will unplanned chain reactions sparked by such moments.

Globalisation

As economic globalisation took hold in the 1990s and into the new millennium, public debate threatened to polarise between pro- and anti-globalisation. Many regarded it as driven by greed, unequal, and bound to result in worse conditions for those who could least afford it. Several economic summits were marred by violence. It seemed to us that this ignored the nature and quality of the process. Globalisation was a fact of life. Whether its effects were

more positive or more negative would be determined by the thinking and decisions of those who drove it – which in one way was all of us!

Indian colleagues picked up this thought. India was becoming an important economic power, but seemed uncertain how to respond to globalisation. With strong comparative advantages in the world market India seemed well placed to ride the wave, but was only just emerging from decades of economic protection, which meant that parts of its economy were neither confident nor competitive. For years, MRA had been extremely active in the industrial sector, training thousands in ‘human relations at work’ at its centre in Panchgani, and making, I believe, an important contribution to the spirit of India’s industrial revolution. In January 2003 a seminal conference took place there, supported by CIB, examining India’s response to globalisation.

Whether India was to benefit from or be harmed by globalisation, they concluded, would depend largely on the standard of governance in both government and business. Only if corruption could be reduced would there be a strong enough base to make the most of the opportunities. Fourteen months later I was in India, and was able to participate in a follow-up meeting. Already they had launched a new IofC Centre for Governance, in which a group of recently retired, high-ranking civil servants, who between them could reach the top people in every Indian organisation, were giving strong leadership. I was hugely impressed to see and hear what they were doing. I still am.⁸

CIB argued that those who favoured globalisation, which was a hugely powerful coalition of international business and most western political leaders, needed the ideas and

8. See www.iccentreforgovernance.org

Did we get it right, Love?

input of civil society if they were to achieve legitimacy and public acceptance. On the other hand, those who feared that globalisation would harm vulnerable social groups and the environment could not hope to bring about the things they wanted without the know-how and resources of international business. Would the two groups talk to each other?

One perceived standard-bearer for globalisation was the World Economic Forum. It still meets in the Swiss mountain resort of Davos every February, and is attended in particular by business and political leaders. Those who opposed globalisation began to convene in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre under the title of the World Social Forum.

The organisers of the CIB conferences invited the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the World Social Forum (WSF) to a debate at Caux in 2003, where they might 'talk with each other rather than at each other'.⁹

Jose Figueres, Managing Director of the WEF (and former President of Costa Rica), represented Davos, while Ignacio Ramonet, co-founder of the WSF, and director of the Paris newspaper *Le Monde Diplomatique*, spoke for Porto Alegre.

The two men clearly respected each other, and their interplay was fascinating. Ramonet spoke more from the heart, reminding us how many children had died from malnutrition that very afternoon, while Figueres was more cerebral, searching, for example, for ways to drive the growth of the world economy. They took care not to agree with each other too often, but their thinking was not so far apart. Both were talking about how globalisation could be made responsive to the needs of the poor. They parted on

9. By this time the CIB conferences were run by Steven Greisdorf, USA, formerly of the IMF, and Menso Fermin, a financial controller from the Netherlands. I was less involved.

Business and the economy

good terms, having given us a tantalising glimpse of the convergence which could be possible.

This dialogue between the two Forums seems to me a good example of what is now needed. In recent years we have learned more about what is happening to the world's climate, and unregulated financial markets have been discredited. It is clearer than ever that we all sink or swim together, and that cooperation between former opponents will have to become commonplace. There will be a need for a lot more dialogues of this sort.

Family

A widely recognised hazard that goes with committing to a great cause is that your spouse may find they have married the cause as well as the person they loved, and your children are born to a way of life shaped by an allegiance they may not share.

At the beginning this seemed an unnecessary concern. All of us were young, committed and (mostly) carefree. If we got married, it would very likely be to someone who shared our beliefs – true enough, as it turned out for me – and surely our children would benefit by being brought up in a united, purposeful family. Much more to the point was how to find and get to know the right girl among so many wonderful candidates, without falling foul of the clear moral code we had accepted, or becoming too preoccupied with the whole business!

Having no sisters and been to an all-boys' school, the female half of the world was a book I had hardly opened, let alone read from cover to cover as some of my male friends claimed to have done. Besides, I am shy by nature.

However, it was part of the proposition we had accepted that if God had a purpose for our lives, this included who we should marry and when, just as much as any other aspect of life. This helped a lot. It meant I didn't need to strive and worry. I could trust that whoever this person was, we would be ready for each other, and would share the same values and the same approach to marriage.

Family

So there I was in my mid-20s, wondering whether it was time to put all this into practice. I knew and liked quite a few girls, without having much idea what they thought about me. I was inclined to be pessimistic about that, and felt intimidated by those who seemed most glamorous.

Anne Vickers began to stand out from the crowd because I felt relaxed with her and more ready to believe it would work out if I did not push for it. Though I did not know her all that well, I enjoyed her company and knew she had made the same basic life commitment as me. She was about a year younger than me, seemed to make friends easily, had nice brown hair, and freckles. She was also trained as a secretary/PA, and had worked with several of the leading personalities of MRA. This had meant quite a lot of travelling, so we had only met occasionally.

Often I found it hard to trust my own judgement, and occasionally the growth of my feeling for her was overlaid by other thoughts or emotions. Once I confided in my brother, and he asked why I didn't get on with it before someone else got there first. At times I felt exactly the same way, but I remember answering that I was not sure enough yet. Over a year or two, what started as a possibility became an intention and then a decision.

I began to look for natural opportunities for us to spend time in each other's company. I was at that stage working on my family's farm in Whitbourne, but I was surprised how many such occasions there were, some by design and some by complete accident. At last the time came for a long walk together in Oxford, where she was living, during which I told her exactly how I felt and proposed. Ever practical, she had asked a lot of searching questions about what I hoped for and intended to do in life.

Did we get it right, Love?

There followed an excruciating week's waiting (during which I did my best to concentrate on a course in South Wales teaching young farmers about 'pigs' disorders'). I was lucky it was not longer. Then she called to accept.

January 1977

*If she does,
The road ahead will broaden, firm and fine.
Each step ahead, like well-placed 'cat's eyes' in God's plan,
Come into view as needed.*

*With her, the verges spring to life.
No ditch so splattered, hedge so stale,
But that gives some reflected joy and interest
By her presence.*

*If she does,
I'll look each traveller in the eye,
And together we'll thank the God who made us –
The God who brought us together.
And together we'll tread his road.*

*If she doesn't,
I'll try to do the same,
Despite her absence.*

Family

Later she told me that marriage to me had not been a completely new idea to her, but neither was it a clear hope or intention in her mind. She had quite quickly wanted to accept, but had given her thoughts and feelings several days to settle down before replying.

Once we were free to acknowledge our love for each other, it was a bit like letting a young dog off its leash – you know it has been tugging at the lead, but you have no idea of the energy waiting to be freed until you let it go. What a feeling! An important part of this was for each of us to take time to tell the other the bad as well as the good about our lives to date. To have no secrets helped us love and trust each other more not less.

That is our story. Did we take an unnecessary risk in getting engaged without getting to know each other more closely and intimately? Doing it the way we did was counter-culture at the time, and even more so now, I think. If we made the right choice in each other it felt as much by good fortune as good judgement. Of course we have had our moments, but on the fundamentals, after 31 years we keep being surprised how well we match. Perhaps it was a risk, or a step in faith. But how can marriage be anything else?

We do indeed feel fortunate, in life and in each other, and find that this is motivating. 'From those to whom much is given, much will be expected' has been one of our underlying themes from our wedding day in 1977 onwards.

We are also fortunate in our children. Charlie was born in 1980 and Tim three years later. No couple is ready trained for parenthood, and no doubt we made all sorts of mistakes, most of which we were entirely unaware of.

Did we get it right, Love?

1989

*When first we kissed
We shared that present moment.
Savoured it like expensive wine.
Its novelty and magic kept us awake at night,
Our pulses racing
However many miles stood between.*

*Before long we had sworn to share the future,
To form an arch – the top still leaning in to kiss,
Each side dependent on the other's firm foundation -
To try to stand where many people could pass through.*

*When children came, that future had a face -
Two mischievous faces –
That shared the space until then ours alone.*

*And now increasingly we share the past as well.
Our kiss still tells of present and of future
But also of the things we've lived together.
The storms and tremors, ups and downs,
The things we got into
And had to get out of,
The places, the people, the thoughts.
Not my past, and not yours, but ours.
A joint account for both to draw on freely.*

*Sometimes I want to live them all again,
Like a gourmet in the middle of a feast
Who regrets the courses he has eaten and can no longer taste.
But that is not of this world.
Perhaps the next.*

*Meanwhile, the feast itself is on.
And many people must walk through our arch.*

Family

Just before Tim was born, we moved from central London to rural Cheshire, where we lived at Tirley Garth, the very same conference centre where Anne and I had first met.

Anne was responsible with others for organising the housekeeping for the centre. There was residential accommodation for over 80, a large kitchen and meeting rooms to match. Typically there would be 15 to 20 people living there, and others visiting for a fairly constant programme of meetings, conferences and training courses. I was involved in many of these, and became a Trustee responsible for the finances, in addition to what I was already doing at Caux, in London and elsewhere.

We could not have managed this with pre-school children without help from four young women who at different times spent longer or shorter periods with us. To us this seemed a normal extension of our commitment to the world, and we remain grateful to each of them for their stint as part of our household.

Anne became a Governor of the primary school where Charlie and Tim went, while I rediscovered cricket after a long gap, playing with a village team at weekends. They were great times.

Like so many other parents with demanding lifestyles, we did our best to ensure that Charlie and Tim were not deprived of time with us. I think this was especially demanding on Anne. It also meant that we moved house several times within the grounds of Tirley Garth,¹ each time to a place which could feel more like our own family home. This was often a delicate process, because being more available to the family meant for both of us being less constantly

1. Within the grounds there were a number of buildings, offering a variety of accommodation and different levels of privacy.

Did we get it right, Love?

1989

*Yesterday I was at peace.
Playing cricket on the lawn with Charlie,
Chasing round the bushes with Tim,
The sun shone us into shirt-sleeves
And you could smell spring flowers in the air.
Then working into the evening
At work that I and those around me
Feel to be important.
I really couldn't ask for more.
And yet
Somewhere over the horizon
Is the point and consummation of it all –
Of gifts and favours lavished on the way,
And pain and effort freely given in faith.
Somewhere in my heart a central chamber
Yet unfilled,
Though I am given all that I could hope for.
Something to remind me that I am a bird of passage,
Bound for somewhere else.
Only the very fortunate get such a clear reminder.*

Family

available to all the other people at Tirley Garth. Others had to fill the gaps we left behind.

The same, of course, applied when the time came to leave. We had watched my parents, still living on the family property in Whitbourne, getting older and more in need of support, and it began to dawn on us that we might be the ones to provide it. We also hoped that both Charlie and Tim would have a chance to put down their own roots there. So in 1992, after nine years, we left Tirley Garth in the care of others, who left us free to go without complaint at what must have felt to them an extra burden, and 'came home'.

The welcome we received from my father and mother was wonderful, as was Anne's care for them, especially for my mother whom she nursed through Alzheimer's. Often my work took me away for more than half of the year. But these are stories for another time.

What Charlie and Tim now feel about all this, or about growing up with parents who earned no salary,² is something they will have to say. From our side, Anne and I are proud of both of them, and very happy about the men they have become.

2. For most people, lofC is a way of life, enhancing their everyday work and career. Only a minority devote themselves full-time to lofC work, as we did. In the early days we were all volunteers. These days lofC offers modest salaries, but since I am a trustee of the charity that pays them, Anne and I have never been able to receive one, relying on whatever resources we have and the support of other people.

Did we get it right, Love?

*For Anne, accompanied by some roses,
after my last absence of 1998*

*For coping and caring
Alert and aware-ing
And never despairing
Despite all my tearing
All over the place.*

*For often remaining
Come sunshine, come raining,
And always refraining
From ever complaining,
I LOVE YOU.*

Eastern Europe

The Cold War was real and dangerous. I have two vivid memories of it as a child.

One is seeing my parents being instructed how to run an outdoor soup-kitchen during winter on our farm, with locally available equipment, food and fuel. This was, as I understood it, preparation for an invasion of the countryside by survivors from an atomic bomb on Birmingham, 35 miles away.

Later, during the Cuban missile crisis, I watched fascinated as our French teacher tried to keep his mind on the lesson. After a while he gave up, and had us gather round the radio to find out whether there was indeed going to be another World War. To us 12-year-olds, it was rather exciting. But not to those who had a grown-up idea of what it might mean.

In my mental map of Europe, we – people I could visit, talk with and understand – stopped abruptly at the Iron Curtain. That is where they, whom I could never meet, talk with or understand, began. Czechoslovakia in 1968 cemented these attitudes.

Ten years later I switched on the TV news to see footage of striking shipyard workers in Gdansk, Poland. The hairs stood up on the back of my neck as I listened to their chants: 'SOLIDARNOSCZ! SOLIDARNOCZ!' These working men were openly defying their communist government and getting away with it. What is more, in that 'atheist waste-

Did we get it right, Love?

land', they prayed openly together, right there in the shipyard. Whatever the dangers they ran, they were clearly proud and happy about what they were doing.

That day, my ideas about Eastern Europe started to change, and my interest to grow.

My first opportunity for making contact came in 1980, when the new Polish Trade Union, Solidarity, was invited to send a delegation to the UN International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference in Geneva. This annual event also provided valuable networking opportunities for MRA. Five came from Solidarity, including Lech Welesa, Geremek (later Polish Foreign Minister) and Stelmachowski (later the first President of post-communist Poland).

They were a sensation. While most delegates cruised around Geneva in large cars and smart suits, these five rattled around from one official occasion to the next stuffed into a tiny Fiat 500, which they had probably driven down from Poland. When Walesa was invited to speak to a plenary session of the ILO, I thought the standing ovation would never end. Everyone was on their feet clapping and cheering, with the exception of the USSR and Romanian delegations, who remained rooted to their seats in obvious discomfort.

A day or two later I was walking along a narrow path near the UN building when a man came in the other direction with his nose buried in a copy of *Le Monde*. It was Geremek. I introduced myself, and said I was interested to know more about Rural Solidarity (then a new farmers' organisation with 10 million members) and whether British farmers could do anything to support them.

Stelmachowski was the authority on Rural Solidarity, and a few days later Geremek introduced me to him, with two of

my colleagues, in his room at a tiny, low-cost hotel. I remember his striped pyjamas peeping out from under the pillow, along with the top of what looked like a whisky bottle.

Perched on whatever furniture we could find, we sat around and discussed Rural Solidarity, farming, and Moral Re-Armament. The men from Solidarity were trying to find out who they could trust in this new Western world, and I think we passed that test.

I did, in fact, approach several people to promote the idea that Rural Solidarity should be invited to join the International Federation of Agricultural Producers. They were invited shortly afterwards, though I think it was already happening without any help from me.

Then, in 1989, suddenly the Berlin Wall was down and Europe was changing dramatically. An old friend and colleague of mine at Tirley Garth, Rex Dilly, had served with the Polish Corps during World War II and had many contacts there. In April 1990, I asked him if I could join him on a visit he was making to Poland. We visited Krakow, Lodz and Warsaw, staying with his friends, many of whom belonged to the Catholic intelligentsia (a word still freely used there) who had supported Solidarity, but who could hardly be described as trade unionists in the accepted sense.

In Krakow I stayed with Antoni Potocki. He had been making a living in the communist days by dealing in computer equipment and by farming mushrooms. His home was surreal. Inside, the house was being renovated at great cost. Nothing was complete, but I was given a mattress to sleep on in the huge, half-finished library, that was clearly destined to contain thousands of books. Outside, the local authorities, acting, we were told, out of spite, had some years before diverted a railway branch line so that it ran

Did we get it right, Love?

across the lawn of the house, passing about 30 feet from the front door. No wonder he and his friends sometimes referred to their country under the communist regime as *Absurdistan*.

In Lodz we were guests of the Mayor, Grzegorz Palka, who was one of the Solidarity high command. In between emergency visits to Warsaw to fend off municipal bankruptcy he would talk in a relaxed way about his recent visit to Caux, and all his hopes and plans. The first free elections in a generation were approaching, and new political parties were springing up. One evening Palka took us to a large church hall, where he proceeded to conduct a vigorous meeting with about a dozen people. We watched, without understanding a word. At one point he broke off, and explained to us that they had just founded a new political party, and teased us that we were to be founder members. This was to become the Polish Christian National Union – a major political force, I believe.

I wasn't sure whether to be in awe at the events we were witnessing or amused at our ridiculous situation. As the meeting went on, I passed this note to Rex:

In the corner of a large church hall
With about a dozen people overall
We are planning a campaign
For a Party with no name
In a language that we cannot speak at all.

It was a great experience to meet these people, living amidst radical transition and so full of hope about where they were going. Some of them had become overnight heroes. It made me think of another generation who must have fought, hoped and in many cases suffered to bring about those changes, but never lived to see them.

Poland, April 1990

*I was not old when I refused
The lies and evil ways they used,
And paid the price I knew I'd pay
Incarcerated far away,
Still hoping I'd come back one day.
But I was born too soon,
and no-one knows my name.*

*You love your life, and so did I,
Yet would not hold it with a lie.
The vivid memories, family, friends,
The hopes that someday this would end –
Both you and I, we would not bend.
But I was born too soon,
and no-one knows my name.*

*When it seemed set for ever so
More suddenly than you could know,
Your Cross it has become a Crown,
Your land it is again your own,
Your victory has world renown.
But I was born too soon,
and no-one knows my name.*

*Think of me as you turn towards
The thousand tasks that now are yours.
The Truth for which we lived or died –
Build on it, and in it abide.
I would be working at your side,
But I was born too soon,
and no-one knows my name.*

Did we get it right, Love?

Such was our admiration for those who had resisted oppressive governments that we had high expectations that they would be able to help recall the West from its addiction to consumerism. In this we were largely disappointed. The rugged characteristics that enabled many of the Soviet dissidents to resist unimaginable pressures turned out to be different to what was needed in the new situation. A refusal to bend all too easily became an inability to understand or accommodate others. Our expectations were unrealistic.

But in other ways, those early exchanges with Eastern Europe opened our eyes to new needs and possibilities. After so many years of communism, when the only picture of capitalism the public was allowed to see was a deliberate caricature, a rapid transition to a free market economy was always going to be difficult. Having grown up with the idea that a capitalist knows the price of everything and the value of nothing, some people in the newly liberated markets were acting in exactly that way, and the results were not pretty.

At the same time, there was a growing realisation in the West that transparency, trust and social responsibility were good for business, and many skilled trainers and consultants were committed to this agenda. Through the 1990s I made several more visits, with others, to Poland, Hungary, Estonia, Croatia and Russia, seeking to match the need for those ideas and values in the East with trainers and business people I knew in the West who I felt could help.

Invariably those of us visiting from the West returned enriched by the experience. We learned much, made some friends, and many contacts. The UK Embassy in Moscow financed us in a pilot course in business ethics in Novosibirsk, Siberia. We held a fascinating two-day seminar with young entrepreneurs in Tallin, Estonia. But in their main objective, these efforts seem to have borne little fruit.

Poland, April 1990

*We always knew you were there, Lord,
And what you wanted.
At times the pressure was terrible.
But we knew The Truth –
It was the opposite of The Lie.
Most of us compromised a little,
Not too much; some more, some less.
A few not at all,
And these we followed.
At first with our hearts,
Then with our feet and voices raised, risking all,
And finally, on that day of days,
With our votes.*

*Where are you now, Lord? And what do you want?
We voted to escape The Lie
But only sundered it in pieces
Which now lie in all directions, not just one.*

*My inner compass spins, confused.
With no more national crucifixion
How can we know You on your Cross?
Our challenge now is economic. Are you a capitalist?
How many thousands should be unemployed?
We must start firms, think of quality and service.
Are you a management consultant?*

*I still come to Mass when things are not too busy.
But all this takes time and concentration
Which once we kept for you, because we needed you.
Do we need you now?*

Did we get it right, Love?

Were we too early, seeking to establish a new trend before the need had become sufficiently recognised? Did we misread the situation? I don't know. But I still believe that sooner or later training in business ethics and corporate social responsibility will take off in Eastern Europe. Perhaps it will be better done by local people.

Russia

During this time, negotiations were going on for the accession of many Central and East European countries to the EU. This seemed a wholly positive development, and provided both a means and an incentive for these countries to overhaul their systems, making them less prone to corruption. Ironically, at this same time all the European Commissioners were suspended because of corruption in some of their departments.

The Commissioner for Foreign Affairs at the time was a Dutchman called Hans van den Broek. So far as I know, he was untainted personally by any of the corruption. A Dutch colleague¹ and I took advantage of the relative inactivity brought on by his suspension to go and see him. He knew about MRA and its track record in Europe. We asked him if he thought we could help in the difficult accession process, perhaps helping to build trust between former enemies who were now having to cooperate or offering training in business values as outlined above.

He is a tall, urbane man. I remember him stretching out his legs as he sat on a sofa, and putting his finger-tips together as he thought about our question. No, he eventually said,

1. Kees Scheijgrond, a former naval officer, currently Chair of IoFC in The Netherlands.

***First visit to Russia,
Novosibirsk, Siberia, October 1994***

*I am the road through the birches.
I have always been there.
Invaders, protectors, prospectors, developers –
I have carried them all.
My surface knows the bite of tank tracks
And the tired shuffle of prisoners' feet.
I know by name
The women who sell berries at the crossroads.
Like my friends the birches,
I change with the seasons.
Like the birch forest,
I am never destroyed,
But easily hurt.*

*I am hurt by some of those who use me;
By the evil in their minds,
By the wrongs they go to meet
Or by the suffering they flee from.
I am hurt, but I wait.
And the birch leaves come and go, and come and go.*

*For my route is not an accident.
I do not just lead from here to there,
And from there back to here.
I am the road of life.
For those who find me among many other roads
I lead to a new day
Which I will share with all my travellers
And with the women who sell berries at the crossroads.
I will carry all the world on that day.*

Did we get it right, Love?

he thought EU accession for the main group of countries was well on the way, and, despite many pitfalls, it would be successful. Where we could help, he thought, was in the countries further East where the culture and value systems seemed so different that the EU hardly knew how to operate. I often think about this conversation as Russia and the West seem sadly to drift further apart.

'Foundations for Freedom'

We heard from many East European friends about a huge mentality change that was needed there. In Britain we tend to be either self-critical, disregarding the heritage of generations of democratic ideals and processes, or complacent. It is rare that we express clearly the values which still enable our democracy, flawed though it is, to work as well as it does. Servant leadership, integrity, personal responsibility, trust and cooperation do not feature much in our conversation. These qualities often seem to be honoured more in the breach than the observance, but they still underlie those parts of our democracy which work best. In Eastern Europe there is not even the heritage to build on.

The underlying values on which a free society and a free market rely were usually omitted from all the talk of Reaganomics and Thatcherite ideas. Could we do anything to help redress this omission?

We began to develop ideas for a training initiative for young East Europeans, who would be tomorrow's leaders. Perhaps we could help them establish stronger foundations for their democracy ... and so was born the programme of Foundations for Freedom (F4F). In this early phase, my friend and colleague Edward Peters was its director and driving force.

In a separate development, a British architect with a talent for original thought, Erik Andren, wrote a complete 10-day course designed to introduce people with little background of religious faith or organised moral thought to 'the values which underlie a truly free society'. Erik quickly became part of the F4F planning group, as did others.

It wasn't easy. We argued long, and occasionally loud, about the merits of doing training in Britain or in East Europe, about whether a structured course was more appropriate than the sharing of life experience, and much else besides. Many of these arguments were never finally resolved. Instead, they were by-passed when we decided to try all approaches and learn as we went along. And that is how we started.

Erik was invited to Slovakia to try out the new course, which was a great success. Edward arranged for a group of young MPs from Ukraine to visit the UK 'to study what works and what doesn't work in British democracy, and why', funded by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. We laid on a fascinating and varied programme, but it was the impact of Erik's course which was the most telling.

In 1995 I accompanied him and his wife, Sheila, to Novosibirsk, to give the course to a group of 25 English-speaking university students. As well as being very interested in the course itself and happy to support Erik, I was moved to see how deep it went with the students. I saw it opening up new vistas of possibility for their lives, and creating a powerful shared experience which left them firm friends, keen to support each other.

At the risk of over-simplifying a rich line of thinking presented, discussed and pondered in times of silence, over 10 days, the essence of the course as I remember it was:

Did we get it right, Love?

- to establish through discussion what is meant by values for life and the role they play in society,
- to agree which values the participants rate most highly (The course avoids bringing in a ready-made package of values, drawing them instead from the participants. It is amazing how consistently different groups pick the same six – eight values.)
- to recognise the gaps between aspiration and practice, individually and in society,
- to explore what can be done to close those gaps.

There were hilarious interludes also. An evening of Scottish dancing with the course participants is etched in my memory. We thought we would do the proper thing and invited the director of the training centre, a rather forbidding lady a bit older than me. It fell to me to invite her to dance. I felt comfortable enough trying to help her negotiate 'Strip the Willow', but then Erik unexpectedly changed the music to a waltz. Now I am neither a good nor an enthusiastic dancer, but the lady director's eyes lit up. She was! Erik then filmed the shambles that followed – I have been trying to get hold of that film ever since.

Anyway, that course, with modifications and developments, has now been given over 80 times to some 2000 of the young, English-speaking elite of Russia and Eastern Europe. A surprisingly high proportion look on their participation as a turning point in their lives. It has given rise in a dozen cities to at least three new NGOs, and teams and mutual support groups, many of which are active today. Increasingly, the courses and the follow-up programme are in the hands of local people and delivered in Russian or Ukrainian.

Eastern Europe

Before long, leaders will emerge who will give a different quality of leadership as a result of the training experience they have received. Problems and challenges abound, of course. But I believe something modest yet permanent is being achieved, and I feel proud to be involved.

Spiritual journey – ongoing

There can be few questions more important than whether or not there is an intelligent purpose behind the existence and development of the universe. In other words, does God exist? If he does, our lives suddenly have the most powerful possible context and purpose. And a thousand secondary questions arise about what he or she or it is like.

There are many people who can name the date on which they began to believe in God, and describe in fascinating ways the experiences which brought this about. With me, it has been different. It is said that the Creator allows each of us the experiences we need to fulfil our role in life. In this case, my role seems to require a slow growth of belief rather than sudden certainty.

I can remember when I first wondered whether I believed in God. It was when I noticed that Christmas was about more than receiving presents, eating a lot and having relatives to stay. I think I was six. All I knew was that I wanted the Christmas story to be true, so, as one does at six, I asked my mother whether it was. I forget her exact reply, but I know it was encouraging.

Before long, probably a year later when my grandfather was very ill, I became interested in what happens when people die. I was told carefully about life after death according to the Christian belief, and that it was eternal.

Being rather prone to attacks of youthful boredom, I found the idea of another life which would never end vaguely

1994

*The high dive makes me nervous.
I cannot see the water underneath.
They say that it is deep and warm and welcoming,
But they say it in the blindness of belief.*

*I live my life in fully charted shallows.
I splash and swim and plunge, and feel secure.
But I know that once a person takes the high dive
They can't come back to tell us anymore.*

*And some can dive with grace and with perfection.
And some just fall, all flailing limbs and fear.
Is it pain, or just oblivion on landing?
Can there really be a greater life than here?*

*I know I must believe in life eternal,
But yet I lack the proof to make me sure.
It could be just a wishful thought to calm our troubled minds,
When in fact we dive into a concrete floor.*

*I know full well that we were made with purpose.
I have felt it, lived it, found it to be true.
What creator would it be
Could give this life to you and me
But neglect to have some plan for when it's through?*

*And so I know the day is surely coming
When I will have no choice but take the dive.
God grant that the believing part of me will win that day,
And a welcome in the mists when I arrive.*

Did we get it right, Love?

troubling. One night I tiptoed to my parents' room and woke my mother up to tell her so – she seems to have been my first recourse for such questions. Bless her! She may have thought, 'Get back to bed and stop asking stupid questions at two in the morning,' but she actually said, 'Yes, I worry about that sometimes, too.' That, for the moment, seemed to resolve the matter.

Since then, I have always placed myself on the believing side of the sometimes deceptive line between belief and unbelief in God.

It seems to me it can be deceptive because I know a number of people who place themselves on the opposite side of the line, and yet show every sign of being spiritually alive and developing. Perhaps they belong to a religious tradition which does not acknowledge a being called God – I once heard the Dalai Lama exclaim, with his famous giggle, that he 'belonged to a godless religion'. Or perhaps the version of god they have rejected is one that I could not believe in either.

Without God, the world would look to me a forlorn sort of place, and any attempt to take responsibility for it would be folly – rather arrogant folly at that. But for some amazing people of no faith this is not the case at all, and their spiritual engines seem well tuned, even though I do not understand the fuel they run on. Do they find access to the same spiritual resources without naming the source? Who or what has planted in their spirit a love for people and for the values which I can only draw from my faith? I cannot tell for sure. It is an area for more exploration.

I have worked quite closely with several people for whom this broadly applies. Some have gone on to discover for themselves a deep faith. Others have not. Whatever our differences, there is much to respect, even to admire, in what

Spiritual journey – ongoing

they are and what they do. With humankind under threat from climate change and much else, I am happy to seek common cause with them so long as I do not have to deny my own allegiance.

Many people now say they believe, but in a god of their own design, often drawn from several religions – believing without belonging, it is sometimes called. This is perhaps the spirit of the age at the moment. No doubt it owes much to the glaring failures of many of us who do belong, as well as to a search for freedom of spirit, untrammelled by dogma.

This is by no means always a superficial ‘pick-and-mix’ kind of belief. But I still feel it is important to put down deep and, hopefully, enduring roots in one tradition. Not to do so risks putting the man-god relationship back to front. If God exists at all, he belongs at the centre of our lives. So long as I am choosing what I will and will not believe about him, it is me at the centre rather than God, and that is the wrong way round.

This is not about narrow or exclusive theologies, it is about humility in the face of a mystery no-one can fully penetrate. There is so much that I have yet to discover in my own tradition, so many values I have not begun to master, so many questions piled into a big box labelled ‘awaiting further illumination’. I cannot imagine a time when I would be fit to judge which parts of Christianity are acceptable to me. I’m more concerned about whether I am acceptable to Christianity.

Anyway, how about the practice?

Our teenage acceptance of the proposition to ‘remake the world under God’, which is a shorthand we sometimes used, tested among other things the hypothesis that God

1998

*On another planet, at another time,
Life revolves around, not health, not sex,
Not even money, but – MUSIC.
To live is to tune up, to practise and to play.
Death is when the music stops.*

*Composers abound.
Everyone is a musician, of one kind or another.
Knowledgeable listeners,
Sensitive to the subtlest of tones and feelings,
Who have often yet to master their own instrument.
So alongside genius there is much cacophony.*

*The Great Composer lives there.
All true musicians learn their trade from him.
His scores are the foundation works for every trend and style.
Yet no-one has heard his music as he wrote it.*

*Though he controls all technology,
He never commissions a recording.
He insists on live performances only,
And selects his orchestras at random;
Some good, some badly tuned,
Even some who play from different scores.
So only rarely can the listener detect
A bar or two of majesty.*

*Though every screech and each disharmony
Go through him like a knife,
Still the Great Composer will not intervene
To impose his own perfection.
He has a weakness.
In some way which they cannot understand
He cares more about musicians
Even than his own music.*

Spiritual journey – ongoing

exists. I began to notice that the more I tried to live as I thought God would want, however imperfectly, the freer in spirit I felt and the more the world made sense.

I began to attend church more often, because I felt I wanted to. And the same applied to setting aside time each morning in prayerful quiet. Whereas both these practices had been duties – and I am not by nature dutiful – they became necessary to the life I wanted to live.

The morning quiet time has become part prayer, part self-management tool, and part search for new ideas or insights. If for some reason I miss it, I feel somehow incomplete going into the day, as if I had forgotten to put on some vital article of clothing.

Gradually what started as a rather abstract belief in God has grown into a relationship – a mysterious one, for sure, but also warm, motivating and occasionally astringent.

The description of our mission that I find most satisfying comes from the most common of all Christian prayers – ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven’.

To me it speaks of relationship with God, a concern for the world, and a calling or hope beyond rational understanding. It also very helpfully removes the need to argue or to speculate about the next world.

It is a deeply Christian calling, but not uniquely so. God’s will lived out and applied on earth is the vision of many people in many faiths, who will use their own language to describe it, just as I have. It seems to me to amount to a common cause in which people of all faiths can join as equals without reserve. It may be their deepest common denominator.

On this basis it has been possible for IofC along with many others to embark on a vast multi-faith project, without diminishing in any way the individual faith that each holds. In

Did we get it right, Love?

***My only visit to Northern Ireland so far was in 1999,
during the week in which implementation of the
'Good Friday Agreement' was agreed.***

Thorns -

*Cruel ones which can shred a charming culture,
Can mar an irresistible approach to life
With an irreconcilable distance from one another.*

Thorns -

*Sown with seed from London in the interest of England,
Nurtured by too many for too long,
Able to tear the flesh of hunter and of hunted
Until they neither hunt nor hide,
But only bleed in common victimhood.*

*Yet victimhood can forge a bond,
And dire necessity for change
Can open up a passage for escape
If the hunter and the hunted can but embrace the risk
Of exposure to, dependence on, each other.*

*Thus leaning on each other they emerge
Painfully and stumbling from the thicket,
And on their way another sees them come.
The sower, held fast by thorns of his own planting,
Cannot escape without their help.*

*So easy it would be to pass him by.
Have they not wounds enough unhealed?
The two of them divert to free the third -
Free to clear and burn, and plough and plant together.*

*And on Good Friday far away,
A Thorn - long and barbed and evil -
Falls from the brow of the King of Kings
And gives him pain no more.*

Spiritual journey – ongoing

historical terms we have only just begun to explore what this means.

Of course there are problems. We each bring our interpretation of what God's will is, or at least of how best to seek it. Every one of these interpretations is incomplete. I may believe my tradition's understanding of the mysteries of God is more complete than my neighbour's. He or she is likely to feel otherwise. And we can never prove it for sure in this world.

I am not a theologian; but if we can focus together on living as we should in this world, we become allies. A good Muslim friend¹ once assured me, 'At the level of how we live our lives, nothing divides us.'

1. Egyptian paediatrician, Dr Omnia Marzouk.

The future is upwards

Anyone who sets out to change the world is going to fall short of achieving their aim, however nuanced their understanding of that goal. Even so I have few regrets. Life is too good and too rewarding for that – and, anyway, our work is far from over.

One of our sons asked me not long ago if I thought the risk we took all those years ago had been vindicated by results – or words to that effect. I answered, without too much thought, that I gave the results so far six out of ten, adding that if we had not taken the risk, the score would have been two out of ten. If he had asked me whether I was happy that we took it, I would have been even more up-beat.

But what of the future?

All organisations require management, and a global movement like IofC is no exception. I have served for many years on boards and committees, administering and deploying such resources as have been available. Most of it has been great fun, but now that my term of service with the IofC International Council is over, I hope to leave most of that to others, and learn to play a different role.

And what does the future hold for IofC itself, and indeed for all those who would change the world for the better?

I feel some sympathy for former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, who was famously told in a parliamentary debate with Opposition Leader David Cameron, 'You were the

The future is upwards

future once!' The future of IofC will be shaped more and more by what people younger than me think and do.

I was at a meeting in India early in 2008 when presentations were made of some of the ongoing programmes launched by IofC around the world. There were dozens. It lasted all day and still there were more to come! There is energy and creativity a-plenty. On the other hand, we seem less capable of mobilising behind one or two goals or objectives than was once the case. No-one can tell what lies around the corner. IofC is growing fast in many parts of Asia and the Pacific, Africa and Eastern Europe, but is struggling in its original heartlands, which are north-west Europe and North America.

It has itself changed quite a lot. Having grown from Western Christian roots, for example, IofC is now a multi-faith global movement. A generation ago we were using drama and stage productions of all sorts to reach people. Today we are more likely to offer facilitated dialogues or training courses – less glamorous maybe, but an effective and well-understood medium. Where we were once brash and inclined to be judgemental, we are increasingly open to learn and to form partnerships.

The way of life we accepted all those years ago, and are still exploring today, is universal in its application, but that does not mean that it is a good idea to address all of the world's problems at once! As soon as you face the fact that no one group or movement is going to change the world by itself, the question arises, 'Where in such an impossibly big task do I/we make my/our main contribution?'

We have decided in IofC that for the present we will focus our effort on building trust – 'Building trust across the world's divides'.

Did we get it right, Love?

This grows partly from the achievements of an earlier generation of MRA, whose work, for example, in building normal relations between former enemies after World War II is now widely recognised. Partly it comes from our own more up-to-date experience that dialogue, trust-building and reconciliation is the area where we can be most effective.

It also comes from our analysis of what is most needed. Lack of trust is like sand in the delicate mechanism of any organisation or relationship. But when trust can be built, amazing, positive things become possible.

Trust-building is closely linked to conflict-resolution and conflict-prevention, which have become important fields for study, with carefully researched techniques and many skilled practitioners. We learn all we can, and often partner with them. But we also have a particular approach, drawing on our core proposition of inner growth and change, without which trust is rarely possible.

Last year, after hearing a scientist talking about the carbon cycle,¹ I became convinced that climate change is the greatest single challenge to humankind in our generation. Even poverty and war are increasingly a result of climate change.

For a while I questioned our focus on trust-building. If humankind may destroy the earth by its own over-consumption, doesn't that make trust a side-show?

Two things in particular confirmed for me that a calling to build trust could not be more relevant in the face of threats from a changing climate.

One was watching the UN Climate Conference in Bali in December 2007. The delegates met, acknowledged that great

1. Professor Stefan Harding, of Schumacher College, speaking at a course on 'Gaian Leadership'

The future is upwards

danger and the late hour, and then watched each other, unwilling to be the first to make changes in case others did not follow suit. The reports I saw singled out the USA and China in this regard, but I am sure it applied to others, too. Only when we are convinced that others will not free-ride on our sacrifices will we accept the changes in our economies that are required. And to be able to share scarce resources, such as water, equitably will take an unprecedented spirit of trust, solidarity and, in places, forgiveness.

The other was Darfur, in Western Sudan. There, we are currently witnessing horrible cruelty and suffering. Power politics and competition for oil are heavily involved, but the root cause lies in the tracts of land in that part of Africa which can no longer support their population. Without the population movements this brings about, there would be little for power politicians to exploit. Trust is one of the early casualties of environmental breakdown, and conflict follows.

Increasingly, those in the international community who are dealing with this vast tangle of issues day after day use a simple pregnant phrase to describe what they work for and long to see – Human Security.

What ought to be done to create conditions for Human Security is in general terms fairly clear. But we lack the political will to do it. Governments are not committed enough, electorates are not interested enough, individuals are not powerful enough.

Generating political will requires a spiritually-driven change in our priorities and relationships. Without it, few of our basic problems can be successfully tackled. With such a change, all of them can eventually be solved. The possibilities become almost endless. There can be nothing more relevant and worth while than working, indeed living, to bring this change about.

Did we get it right, Love?

It must be done by a Great Coalition, in which we are all needed to play our role.

I look forward to finding more about my own role, alongside many, many others, in the months and years ahead. I can imagine no more interesting or more satisfying life.

2008

*I serve a fleet of cargo ships
Which sail from here to there,
Weighed down onto the plimsoll line
With products rich and rare.
The crews are drawn from every land,
Are proud of what they do.
And in my dreams, the world, it seems,
Could work in that way too.*

*We've a cargo of forgiveness
That can rupture chains of steel.
Antiseptic and astringents,
Which allow a wound to heal.
For those embarking on a journey
We have compass, maps and fuel.
And we've got tons and tons of golden grain
To feed the hungry soul.*

*I've been a captain on the bridge
And sailed the seven seas.
I've mended holes beneath the line
With bilge up to my knees.
I've sweated in the engine room
To drive us on to land.*

*Now, let me be a docker,
With the cargo in my hand.*

*Yes, let me be a dock worker,
Under the open sky,
Who reads the signs and sees the needs,
And knows how to reply.
Who unloads the needed cargo,
Brings it out on bended back,
And delivers to the point of need
Sack after life-giving sack.*