

# NEW WORLD NEWS

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A Weeks

The women's liberation pioneer, Germaine Greer, described family life in the '60s as 'small, self-contained, self-centred and short-lived'. Seeing the misery this caused, she rejected the system.

The hope for families in the '80s, we believe, lies in rejecting not the system, but the selfishness.

Families who look outwards together with a desire to help those around them, have a context in which to solve their internal problems. They can generate the compassion and political will to meet the needs of a suffering world.

## SPAGHETTI AND THE INNER COMPASS

THERE WERE ONCE three clowns named Ravioli, Tortellini and Spaghetti. They had the magic gift of being understood by children who spoke 16 different languages, and even by those who hardly spoke any language at all. And they used it to good effect at the special family session of the MRA conference at Caux, Switzerland, which ended last week.

Parents and children from 28 countries had come to the conference, described in the invitation as 'part of an international effort aimed at reinforcing the impact of family life on the society of the future'. Families split up for discussion groups and workshops, and joined together for expeditions, cooking and service shifts, and general meetings. It was in these last that the clowns played their part.

### Wall-paper

The central image of the conference was the 'inner compass', the pointer in the heart of child and adult that helps them to find their way. Germain Bouverat, chief of the Department of Family Protection in the Swiss Ministry of Home Affairs, speaking at the opening session, stressed the importance of this. One of the country's most senior officials on family affairs, he said, 'Certainly material aid for families is necessary. But it is in the human conscience that true responsibility develops, and where the real social values are born. I am grateful you are considering these questions at Caux, and thereby contributing to a renewal of our society.' During the conference young and old investigated what living by this inner compass could mean for their daily lives and for their nations.

As parents and children learn to heed the directions of the inner compass, they learn to listen to each other. The latter was vital to the survival of democracy, believed Michel Sentis, a French author and father of three. 'If we do not listen to our children, we won't listen to minorities either,' he said, summing up the conclusions of the conference. 'Could it be that the inhumanity of our present world is caused by too many politicians, educators, industrialists and people of the media having sacrificed their family life to their career? It will be in the family that freedom, faith and equality will live or die, not just for our own family but for the masses of the world.

'I attach great importance to organisation,' he went on, 'but this tendency in me is met by the vehement protests of my children and the diplomatic objections of my wife. Through this I have started to see the importance of freedom of initiative.'

That 'freedom of initiative' flourished in the creative workshops for children and young people. Young journalists and photographers produced a daily 'wall-paper' which was displayed in the foyer. It carried a story on the clowns. 'They show how stupid it can be to be selfish and greedy,' commented the 'wall-paper'. 'They act stupid to show that you are stupid.' Other workshops included cookery, music and drama.

### Larger family

Meanwhile the adults were able to talk about their deepest concerns in 10 discussion groups whose topics ranged from 'What must parents learn from their teenage children?' to 'How do you pass on a faith to



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children?' and 'Money—the dividing or uniting factor in a family'.

The spirit of searching together evoked a profound, sometimes painful, honesty. 'When we are as honest as this little separates us,' commented a German participant. 'By revealing our weaknesses and the places where we can be most hurt we put ourselves into the hands of others. This is a signal of trust which is very important if we want to live creatively. It says in the New Testament, "Behold I have opened a door to you and no one can close it." To me Caux means that open door.'

One of the meetings was attended by the General Secretary of the World Muslim Congress, Dr Inamullah Khan. He challenged the conference to see the family in its widest context. 'Each of us owes it to ourselves to do our bit towards the restitution of the usurped rights of others,' he said. 'Let us rise above considerations of race, nationality and religion and look at people as children of one human family.'

## Clash and cash

**The family session at Caux sprang from difficulties and discoveries in the family lives of its organisers. They came from several countries, and here two of them describe their experiences while preparing the conference. The first comes from Britain:**

FIVE YEARS AGO, after 35 years of marriage, my father suddenly went off to live with another woman. He had never been generous with money to any of us, but now he bought this woman an organ, two fur coats and a house. Suddenly I realised that we would never be a family again.

One sister took my father's side and my mother threw her out of the house, the other took my mother's side. I was stuck in the middle. I lost my trust in God and my love of my father. I tried my best to bring the family together again, but the divisions multiplied because of the bitterness, mis-

**Pauline van der Zee**  
Holland

A FEW MONTHS AGO I went to Paris to meet with others planning this family conference. But I was so worried about the cost of the trip that when I arrived I didn't have the energy to think about anything else. This made me want to think more about my attitude to money, so I suggested that we should have a discussion group on money during the conference. When I got home I started to write down all the things I felt about this, things that I had always pushed away before.

My husband is in the merchant navy. He is often away and so he sends me most of his income and I pay the bills and the taxes. Although he has a good income, I never thought it was enough. I spend it carefully in one way—I always look for bargains and special offers when I do the household shopping. But when the children need something, I am generous, because I like to see a happy face. And then I start worrying about how I am going to pay the bills. And my daughters think, 'Mother is always complaining, but in the end she pays the bills

understandings and hurt pride.

Suddenly this March my father died. I had prayed for a love for him, but never felt it. But when I heard the news, I realised that I had been given that love, without being aware of it. Now my mother is in the middle of a law suit over my father's money and my sister is still banished from our home.

I had felt called by God to help create sound family life in the different countries where I have worked. But when I began to help in preparing this family conference, I wondered what I had to contribute when my own family life was such a disaster.

Then one morning I realised that rather than being unable to help with the conference because of all I had been through, this was maybe why I should help with it. It dawned on me that it is not the disasters themselves, but the way one faces them that matters.

anyway, so why bother?'

Meanwhile my husband would complain that we didn't have enough money to spend on something he wanted. Or he would buy a stereo radio in Japan, and I would accept it, but because I felt it was a waste of money I would never turn it on. This made him sad. So money has created a lot of tension and friction in our family.

Ten years ago I went back to work part-time as a nurse—for high-minded reasons. But gradually nursing began to come second and money first. I took on more work than I could really manage, and I lost my love and care for my work and patients. I was just thinking how much each day or night would add to my bank account.

As I thought about all this, I decided to write down my husband's income and all our expenses and then ask my daughters and my husband, who was at home, for a morning to discuss it. My daughter didn't like the idea, but we did it.

I learned several things that morning. Our eldest daughter is a student and knows exactly what she spends on food. I had no idea how much a person needs each day for food. She really had too little money and together we were able to work out how much she, and our younger daughter, need.

This talk meant the burden I'd been carrying was spread between the whole family. The feelings which had divided us were straightened out. I can now see money, not as a burden, but as something we have to use in the right way.



## 'Australia m

THE ONLY ABORIGINAL in Australia's Federal Parliament, Senator Neville Bonner, last month called for Australia to 'share her horn of plenty with her starving neighbours'. Senator Bonner was introducing the dairy expert, Stanley Barnes, at an occasion in Brisbane, Queensland, to promote his new book *200 million hungry children\**.

Senator Bonner applauded Mr Barnes's specific proposals on how milk should be used to fight world malnutrition.

'It is surely an indictment against all mankind that one in every five children in the Third World will not reach the age of five years because of hunger, starvation and deprivation,' said Senator Bonner. 'Two years ago I visited some of the countries of the Third World, and I'll not forget some of the sights I've seen.' He commended the book to all Australians. 'I sincerely pray as one who has witnessed this suffering also, that

## West needs daylight

**What is the relationship between decisions made in the home and the world outside? A Finnish businessman, PAUL GUNDERSEN, who was attending the conference with his wife, Aino, and their 13-year-old daughter, spoke from his experience:**

ALCOHOL IS a tremendous social problem in Finland. Through a tragedy in our family we have experienced how it can lead to the destruction of finances, family and future. For the sake of those friends for whom just one glass is too much, my wife and I decided that we would not serve any alcohol in our home.

If you take such a stand in business circles

## Going by the book

**Since 1977, French state education has been going through considerable reform. The new manuals have removed many of the concepts on which moral education was previously based. But at the family session, PHILIPPE LOBSTEIN, an inspector of primary schools from Nice, called for parents and teachers to build on what the manuals do say:**

ALTRUISTIC LIVING is given great importance in the sections on moral and civic education of the new manuals of French state education. The secondary school manual has dropped the requirement to teach respect for the name of God, and the word 'conscience' does not appear. But the instructions do stress the importance of teaching respect for others, whatever their background, and of helping them to grow. I

## ...st help starving children'—Senator

the Government of this nation will act to alleviate this human tragedy.'

Mr Barnes was in Queensland as part of a tour of Australian cities to launch his book. In Canberra, he was interviewed by Philip Castle in the *Canberra Times*.

Mr Castle asked Mr Barnes about his Christian motivation. 'The Christian ethic is the basis for democracy and if we try to live without it then the source is missing,' Mr Barnes replied. 'How can we expect democracy to work if the democratic system can't solve these sorts of problems? The Third World will look to another system for the answers.'

'Malnutrition is a human moral problem not a technical problem. We will only find the will when we turn to God, then we have the moral authority to proceed. If we are personally greedy then we have no right to expect our country to be different. Of

course the converse is also true.' 'These were tough comments, but Mr Barnes's zeal encouraged me,' wrote Mr Castle. 'Mr Barnes's solution is simple and he is here in Australia to convince Australian people and politicians that it can work.'

*The Age of Melbourne* reported Mr Barnes's calls for Australia to stop protecting its own industries at Asia's expense, to give milk as aid to Asia and to combat malnutrition among Australian Aborigines through a milk-for-infants programme.



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\*From *Grosvenor Books*, 54 Lyford Road, London SW18 3JJ, £1.50, with postage £1.95.

you can run into ridicule. A man in our company came to see me. His home was on the point of breaking up and he had been warned about neglecting his work. I told him about our decision. He said he was afraid of annoying important contacts and losing their contracts if he did not go along with these social customs. But he had the courage to cut with his old way of life, his family was saved and he is now one of the most trustworthy men in the company.

The pressure to be dishonest can be strong. Executives tell their subordinates to lie in discussion and negotiations, often underestimating the shrewdness of the other party. Many use corruption as a means of furthering their interests.

Western businessmen are often not aware of the battle that some Third World leaders wage to root out corruption, which they say

is the main obstacle to social justice in their countries. Their real allies are those Western businessmen and industrialists who make honesty their policy.

Honesty is not stupidity. It does not mean telling everything you know to somebody who is out to exploit you. It is a decision not to be part of a mechanism in industry or business that cannot stand the light of day.

The battle against corruption starts with honesty in simple details. It has been astonishing how those working with me have responded when I have told them of my decision to be absolutely honest. They have felt relieved and have since taken strong action to correct dishonesty in our company.

My wife and I also meet people from parliament. One MP told me that it is in the closed sessions in parliament that an

MP's courage in following his convictions is really tested. We have discovered that they do not expect us to be experts on technical issues, but that we can help on the simple issues of openness, forgiveness, sticking to your convictions, the things that help them to retain their integrity and their vision.

Absolute moral standards are allies to help you live the life that in your heart you want to live. A time of listening for God's direction each morning is a royal gift. It gives peace of heart. It clarifies priorities and prepares you for the unexpected chances that come. It helps me live in the reality of every day life. It opens my heart for all, including the difficult man I am going to meet, and stretches my mind beyond my daily duties to accepting my part in God's task of reconstructing the world.

think that something new can be built on this.

A colleague of mine described these instructions as 'the five pages of the manual that are never read'. Still less are they put into practice. We French have a tendency to think that if we formulate the instructions well, that is enough. I have decided that for the rest of my career I will work for these concepts to be applied in schools.

On my visits I often find happy, free classes, where the children have been taught, by the teacher's example, to help each other. There was the kindergarten where the children thought out ways to help a blind child find her way around. Or the class where a child learned to read in one month, after several years of failure, simply because his friends decided to stop laughing at his difficulties in pronunciation. A little girl who did not talk at all learned to speak, read and even write poetry after a friend took her in hand. Children know better than we do how to help their classmates, because they are

closer to them and understand them.

School can sometimes make up for what has not been done for the child in the family. But it is in the family that the child is shaped.

For example, in one village school a group of children were disrupting classes and the teacher could not cope. The school councillors were consulted without success and then I was called in. What could we do? We decided to call a meeting of the parents, school councillors, municipal authorities, psychologists and all concerned.

The meeting started with everyone accusing everyone else—the administration, the mayor, the teacher. There was some truth in it all.

I asked for quiet, and said, 'Could everyone try to see his or her responsibility for what has gone wrong?' My question changed everything. The mother of one of the worst trouble-makers broke down. Her husband had more or less left her and she was desperate about her children. The President of the Parents' Association said, 'We must

help her.' The psychologist assured us that there was nothing really wrong with the children. Everyone started to think what they could do.

Finally the teacher asked to be moved elsewhere and we were able to arrange this without bad feeling.

Her replacement arrived expecting the worst. But after a bit he asked, 'Where are the hooligans?' The families, municipality, and school councillors had quickly put an end to the problem. The Mayor wrote to me later, 'The school is going well. Of course, there are still tensions between families, and not all is changed, but the overall result is very positive.'

Moral education, I believe, is the skill of awakening a child to other people. When this happens, and children and adults face up to the simple requirements of honesty and respect for others, it can transform a school or a family. The education manual contains enough for us all—parents, teachers, inspectors—to make a start.



Tug of war at family conference

## GOOD-BYE TO THROW-AWAY RELATIONSHIPS

**HENNIE DE POUS is married, has a baby son, and is an editor of the Dutch fortnightly, 'Nieuw Wereld Nieuws':**

WE LIVE IN a consumer society. We not only throw away articles—children's nappies, bottles, tin cans. We also throw away relationships.

We all have relationships with countless others. Everyone who has known loneliness knows how much we need them.

Through these relationships we get to know each other, but even more we get to know ourselves. As I see it, there are two basic attitudes to other people—either we remain aloof, or we feel responsible. People with the former approach want to 'remain free' at all times—free to break off a relationship when it stops coming up to their expectations, free to criticise without getting involved. This is a very human attitude—but it leads to an inhumane society.

Responsibility is a sign of maturity. You are free to choose, but once you have chosen you are no longer free to do what you want. Then you are committed to somebody or something, and that commitment takes priority over your comfort.

This is true not just for relationships between individuals, but between all kinds of groups, and between countries—especially between rich and poor countries. We of the rich countries stay far too aloof from the poor countries.

And it is true for relationships between men and women. Many do not dare to vow, 'Till death do us part'. They prefer to try it for a while. The rising divorce rate is no encouragement to those who want to promise faithfulness for life. I do not believe the answer is not to marry, but rather to marry on a more realistic basis. True love is based on the fact that responsibility is as important as feelings.

Most important of all, for me, is my relationship with God. And a commitment

to God means a commitment to one's neighbour as well—and that means love.

If I don't understand somebody I easily dismiss them as 'hopeless' and stop loving them. But I have decided instead to keep my heart open and go on loving, even if I can't do anything else. This helps me in my attitude to division and injustice, too—I can go on caring even if I sometimes feel helpless about what can be done.

Love means accepting the other totally as he or she is. The Dutch psychiatrist, Dr Terruwe, writes, 'You are allowed to be as you are, who you are, with all your faults and shortcomings. I want you to become more and more the person you are able to be, but are not because of your faults. You are allowed to become that in your way and in your time.' If you meet this attitude, you are far more ready to see your mistakes and to change than if somebody demands it.

If a person is not prepared to change, to learn, to ask forgiveness and forgive, no relationship will last. And though clash and difficulties are hard, they can help us to be more realistic both about ourselves and the

other person. In our marriage we know how much energy can be wasted on bitterness and sorrow when things are wrong between us, and how much can be released when we put them right.

Like so many other things, sex has become a cheap consumer article which many feel they have a right to. Some feel that it is needed for a good relationship. But if it is the main ingredient, the relationship is superficial. Sex is not a right. It is a mistake to feel, as many do, that you cannot have a satisfying life without it.

Parallel to our increasingly permissive approach to sex in Europe, runs a growing polarisation between men and women. This is no contradiction. If you use another person for your own satisfaction, you lose respect for them, and with it love.

Men and women, I believe, are not natural enemies, nor competitors, but natural allies. The more we each dare to follow God's calling to us individuals the purer our relationship to the other sex will be, and the more we will be able to give each other their true dignity.

### Points of order

**At an industrial conference in Birmingham DON SIMPSON saw some similarities between family and industrial relations, and came up with 10 suggested guidelines for the home:**

1. Marriage is a partnership—not a take-over. It's not a property deal. We don't belong to each other.

2. In the event of a dispute, insert before every statement the words, or at least the thought, 'I could be quite wrong, but...'—and mean it.

3. The answer to the dispute might include both points of view. This is not just compromise. It could be a wider perspective.

4. Who has the last word? Father? Mother? Why not no last words. After all, last words are the end.

5. Feeling sorry is hell. Saying 'sorry' is magic.

6. If my 'right' is at someone else's expense, it's not right, it's wrong.

7. Solemn promises are meant to be kept.

8. If the family circle is all we are living for, we will go round the bend. Couples need a common aim beyond the daily roundabout. Kids don't always appreciate our nest-eggs. But if we commit ourselves to leave them a new world, they are satisfied and so are we.

9. Bitterness is only useful for demolition. It is dangerous to try and use it as a building material, in families, in industry or society.

10. In a deadlock there's always the Man Upstairs.