

FAMILIES FACE UP TO THE FUTURE

PETER THWAITES reports the family conference which took place in the Moral Re-Armament centre at Caux, Switzerland, from 25 July to 2 August:

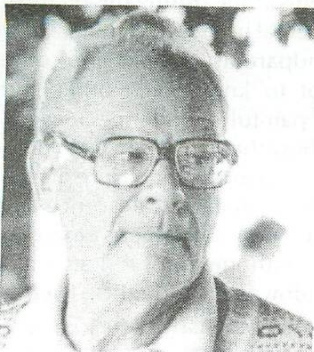
CHANGES IN THE WORLD may depend on changes in individuals, but change in an individual often has to begin in the family.

That is why, for the seventh year running, a large group of families from as far apart as the Netherlands and New Zealand, Uganda and the United States, Turkey and Thailand met in Caux to talk about the 'nitty-gritty' questions of learning to be tomorrow's citizens. The theme was 'Building for the year 2000'. 380 people took part including 61 families or family groups. They came from 30 countries. One of the French and Swiss group that prepared the week wrote that their aim was 'to transform the family into a dynamic element within itself and in society'.

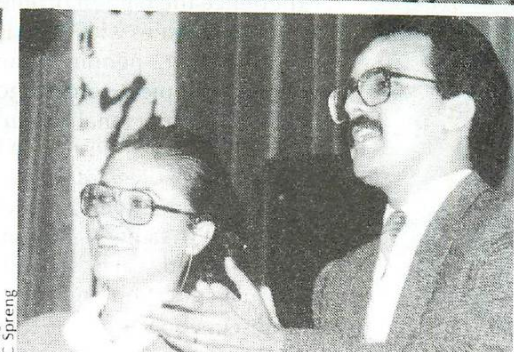
'The family is essential,' said Digna Hintzen from Holland at the opening session. 'When families fall apart, the state cannot fill the vacuum. It has not got the money and it cannot provide the emotional substitute. People who have experienced both say that for children, even the worst family is better than the best institution.'

Charles Piguet, President of the Parents' Association of the Swiss Canton of Vaud, compared the debate over the importance of the family with that over mother's milk. 'We've done masses of research into how to feed babies. We've invented milk powder and investigated a lot of chemicals. Then, after this enormous amount of work, the

Bread-making demonstration



Philippe Lobstein, France



Feride Tapman and Turgay Uçal from Turkey



Robert Thwaites, Australia

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FAMILY CONFERENCE
PAGES 1—6

T. Roodvoets

experts announce that they have made a great discovery—mother's milk is the best for babies! M Piguet predicted: 'You try all sorts of gadgets to bypass this demanding "family cell". And after all the research the sociologists will tell us, "We've made an extraordinary discovery. The family cell is the basis of society!"'

A City Councillor from Utrecht, Aad Burger, traced the origins of this series of family conferences to Holland ten years ago: 'It occurred to us that the family was being attacked repeatedly with many well thought-out arguments. On the other hand, those who felt that the family was still important could only say that it was good, nice, a cornerstone for society. So we began to talk about the family. When we started we found everybody has at least some positive experiences which they can talk about and pass on to others. On the other hand nobody is an expert. If we are honest we have to admit that our family is not perfect, and that often we don't know what to do.'

Lines of thought

Two broadly complementary lines of thought were evident at the conference. One, assuming family life to be necessary and beneficial to individuals and society, was concerned with ways to strengthen and protect the family unit and improve family life.

The other was more concerned with what families were meant to contribute to the world situation. It saw families as laboratories where answers could be learned to problems in the wider society. It also saw that a commitment that went beyond the family was important for its health.

Josiene Burger, a Dutch mother, said many families in the Netherlands like to keep themselves to themselves. 'We have learned to be an open family, to receive other people and families. In Holland we have many refugees from Vietnam. One day in church we were all asked if we would help one family learn about Dutch society. We were given a family with four children, who didn't speak a word of Dutch. *We did not speak* Vietnamese or Chinese. But during these last years there has grown a friendship for life between us.'

Jean-Jacques and Marie-Lise Odier from Lyon, who coordinated the conference arrangements, have two teenage boys. 'The family conferences have given our family a common objective because they are in a world setting,' said Marie-Lise. 'Even if our lives take different forms in different generations, our commitment to God and society is the same.'



Mr and Mrs R D Mathur, India. Everyone helps with the practical work.



Maria Teresa Lopez de Mesa, Colombia

'I believe that in every couple there is a desire, perhaps unconscious, to live for something beyond merely educating their children,' said Jean-Jacques. 'The children will be better prepared to be autonomous, to give themselves and to face up to the real world if they have felt this outgoing quality in their parents.'

'We are not particularly interested in lauding the virtues of the family because we believe strongly that a family either has an inner dynamic that is convincing, or it just becomes a burden on society.' He defined the week as, in Robert Schuman's phrase, 'a process of mutual teaching'.

So much for the seed thoughts of the conference. Of its fruits, some were immediate: shared insights, shared experiences (good and bad), new friendships, concrete steps taken by individuals. But, as last year's family conference showed, the repercussions are sometimes long-term.

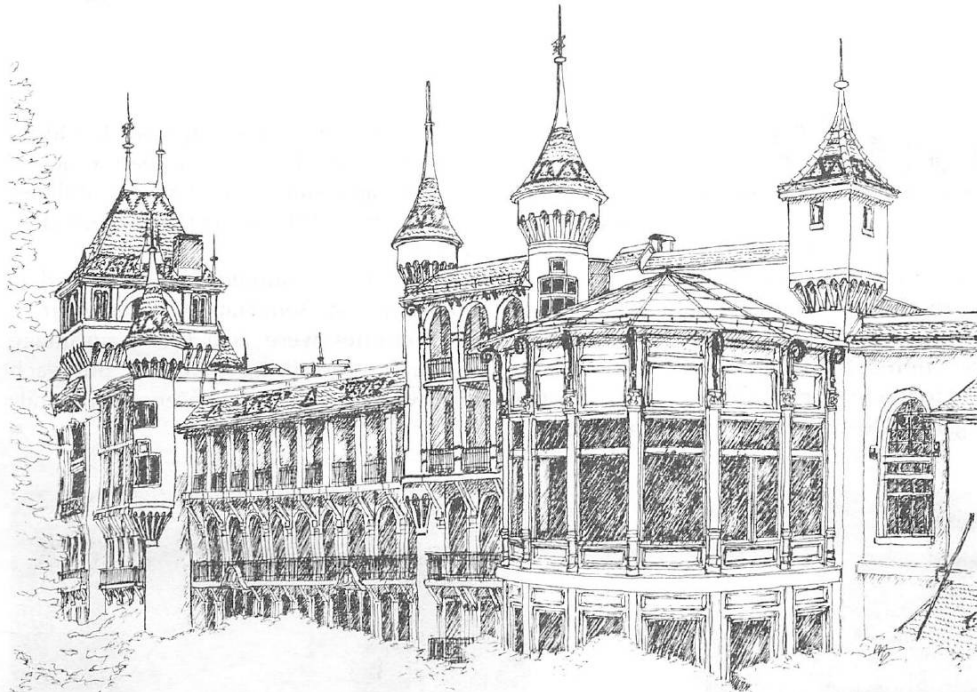
Programme

After breakfast each day a team of puppets and a French peasant addressed the children, to the amusement and edification of everyone. During the main sessions for grown-ups the children had their own groups where the activities included model-making and painting, learning folk dances and games, besides their own discussions. (See box.)

The teenagers met every afternoon and had workshops in mime, music, art and photography. Sport was available for everyone.

Heinz Krieg from Berlin and his wife Gisela led one of the regular discussion groups at the conference. 'We chose the subject "parents with adolescent children" because in our experience the biggest problems come during this phase of loosening the ties with the parental home,' said Heinz. 'Our group of 10-12 people—grandparents, parents and some younger people—quickly got to know each other and talked about personal, often painful experiences. Several people raised the question of how the parent-child relationship could evolve into one of partnership. Here it was helpful to remember our own youth and adolescence and struggles with father's authority. Some suggestions emerged.'

'We started each session with time to reflect on a particular question and note down our thoughts. Then in the discussion we stuck to what we had written, so that everyone was able to contribute—not like some discussion



Mountain House, Caux by Henry Morshead, 16

groups where only those with a ready tongue get a chance!

Three generations of the Fujita family from Japan were at the conference. Ten years ago, Yukihsa Fujita had been working as assistant to a Japanese Member of Parliament. He had visited Caux for the first time, 'full of ambition to pursue my career'. But 'I decided to work with Moral Re-Armament to care for people.' This had brought him and his family into contact with many people including those who are suffering in Cambodia. He paid tribute to his mother, who was present, for sacrificing to support him in his decision. She spoke of how the ideas of MRA had helped her as a Buddhist to work with her son and daughter-in-law who are both Christians. 'We do not see any barrier between us,' she said.

A British girl felt the friendships she had made in Caux had been 'special'. 'The foundation of friendships is very important. If you build your friendships on the standards of purity and honesty, unselfishness and love, what better foundations can you have?' She added, 'You can open your

my mistakes in the last four years.' He had also told her about 'the four standards of life'—honesty, unselfishness, purity and love. He went on, 'with this letter I started to live the first standard of MRA which is honesty. These standards are very practical, but to live them is not easy. To listen to God is very important. Whoever believes in God and tries to do good works for him need not fear. This is God's promise from the Quran.'

Two brothers and a sister from England became, to their parents' surprise, enthusiastic members of service shifts in the dining room. The mother thought it was because they were giving and not just receiving that they judged it their best holiday ever.

A 'variety evening' drew out an extraordinary number of creative talents from people of all ages, including the teenagers in the mime, art and music workshops. It was a sudden glimpse into the enormous creative power that is in families, and which conferences like this can tap, enlist, mobilise for the work that needs to be done in the world. ■

Ai Fujita, Japan



Young answer

THERESE BARRAUD and her friends put some questions to a group of six to eight year-olds. Here are some of their answers:

Question: Are you allowed to eat as much as you want?

Answer: No, because when you open the refrigerator there is nothing left and it is not interesting for the others.

Answer: No, because the Mums have enough work and cannot spend the whole day making more meals.

Q: Can you tell anyone about your worries?

A: Yes, to God, to friends, to the caretaker's son who is older than I am.

A: To Jesus, and he helps me.

Q: Can you help to get a meal?

A: Yes. If you help your Dad he doesn't get so tired and it goes quicker.

A: Yes, you can help, but carefully so as not to break everything.

Q: Can God talk to us?

A: Yes, he is sometimes in our hearts.

FAMILY POLICY

AT THE END OF THE CONFERENCE some participants met with a French MP, Jean Briane, and Germain Bouverat, head of the Swiss Government's Service for the Protection of the Family, to discuss family legislation. Questions which came up included: respect for and protection of the family cell; that all legislation should pay heed to the realities of family life; and how society should be organised to meet the needs of families.



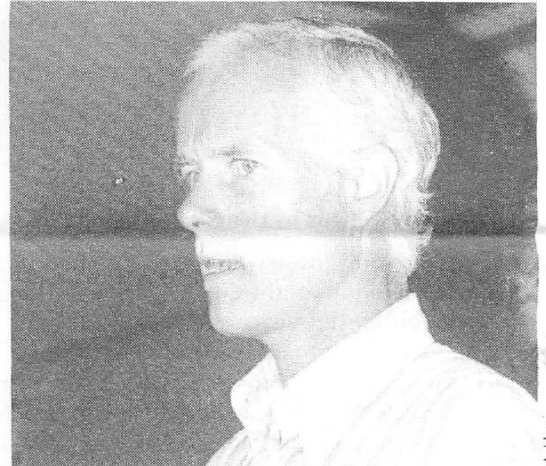
(L to r) Charles Piguet, Jean Briane and Germain Bouverat

Mr Briane suggested that people concerned with family life should join together in associations and have their views more systematically represented at the political level. 'As a politician I prefer to be visited by people from organisations with precise interests, than by isolated individuals.' Government institutions were also more sensitive to organised movements than to single individuals.

He said that the family unit needed a recognised legal

status in society. The mother's social function should be recognised and the family should be guaranteed sufficient material resources to carry out its vital responsibilities, including a guaranteed minimum family income independent of the welfare system.

The position of the family should be recognised in national constitutions, said Mr Bouverat. At present married couples in some countries were at a tax disadvantage compared with couples just living together. But each country needed to work out its own consensus on family policy. ■



André Dunant from Geneva is president of the international association of children's judges. He was one of several who spoke on the theme of authority in the family. He said that, in his 20 years' experience, 'the greatest harm caused to children and adolescents is not absence of authority or too much authority, but where the two alternate in the same person.' More frequent was lack of unity between the parents, where one refused permission and the other gave it. In working with young people, he said, the important thing was to be firm with a natural and benevolent authority. You should not make concessions which you do not feel are in the interest of the person before you.



WHAT ROLE FOR WOMEN?

Catherine Dickinson, USA

WHILE STILL VERY YOUNG, I noticed the frustration of many women in the generation before mine, torn between their role as mothers and the intellectual and professional aspirations for which their education had prepared them.

Meanwhile, their husbands were able without too much trouble to combine an interesting career with the joy of fatherhood. I had a great sense of injustice about this.

Later when my husband asked me to marry him, he told me a lot about his country, the United States, which I did not know, and about what he reckoned to do there. I remember asking him two questions: 'And are you interested in French culture?' and: 'Will you be ready to take on part of the housework?'

What these two questions expressed was my concern for give and take, for sharing, but also the hope that we would envisage our style of family life without preconceived ideas, that we would not assume certain roles because I was a woman and he was a man.



A Strong

Steve and Catherine Dickinson, Nicolas and Andrew

Steve did not disappoint me. From the moment of our engagement he got down to learning French. Later on I assumed the major role in caring for the children because both of us felt that this was the best solution for us and them at that moment. Being able to make a choice was very liberating.

The babyhood of our two sons was spent in a fairly large town of the Middle-West, in a suburb deserted by adults during the day. I was one of the few mothers staying at home. Our families lived several thousand kilometres away and I suffered a lot from loneliness. At first I blamed this on my being a foreigner, but gradually I discovered that a number of young American mothers suffered from the same thing.

As well as that, the job of housewife and mother is not highly valued. People say that the woman at home does not 'work' and that her role does not demand many capacities. In such a situation it is not surprising that we find fewer and fewer people disposed to raise tomorrow's adults and to create the indispensable family cell.

How can we turn this tide?

For my part I try to pass on the experience of reflection, of listening to God, which has enabled me to take up my role as mother and wife. I am in regular touch with women of all

kinds, some married, some unmarried, some at home, others in absorbing professions.

One of my friends with an over-busy husband escaped her loneliness so successfully in intensive voluntary work that she no longer had the time to look after her household or her children. By pruning her life, she was able for the first time to serve hot meals at regular times to her sons.

A woman executive who dreamed of being the first vice-president of a multi-national company decided to refuse a promotion. With the full support of her husband, but for the first year without any remuneration, she helped to launch an enterprise finding jobs for unemployed professional people.

I have seen several young couples so busy that they were hardly seeing each other during the day, who then reserved time to talk about the budget or how they could help friends and neighbours.

These women didn't need my fine ideas or good advice. But for all of us the time of listening, of pooling the thoughts which come to us, is essential and creates new life. ■

Steve Dickinson

YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT the couple where the husband always has the last word—'Yes, Dear!' In our family we have worked hard to ensure that it's neither Catherine, nor I, who has the last word, but God. As well as having a daily time of quiet and sharing our thoughts, we decided to go out together alone once a week, both to be together and to be certain that we have talked through God's leading on every issue and opportunity.

We are a European-American couple, and a second decision has been to raise our children bilingually. I have had a deep conviction to do this because many more of us Americans are meant to learn at least one other language well, understand at least one other culture, and so open ourselves to the great richness and 'differentness' of our world. I believe we in the United States will not be able to carry out, as we are meant to, the responsibilities that have been given to us, unless we are willing to make this kind of effort. ■

Rosemary Thwaites, Australia

WHEN THEY HEAR ABOUT THE PRACTICE of seeking God's direction in a morning 'quiet time' many women will think, 'It's all very well, but I can't do that.' My husband, Peter, says that when I wake up in the morning, my first thought is a plan (my plan). Then my instinct is to charge at the day, dealing with the children, throwing washing in the machine and breakfast on the table as fast as possible. Not all women are like this but I think it's fairly typical.

However, I have learned through trying the importance of getting up a bit earlier in the morning for a quiet time. That means setting the alarm, of course, and maybe, if the kids are small, putting them in another room. Writing thoughts down helps to crystallise them. Many of us women will feel we can't take that half, quarter or three-quarters of an hour in the morning because of the children

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THE VALUE OF TRANSPARENCY

Shirley Harding, Britain

ONE NIGHT, LAST WINTER, Rosemary and I watched a television programme which raised many questions in her mind. She wanted to talk about it, so we went for a long walk. That started a pattern of late night walks. She was revising for exams at the time, and it helped her to relax before going to bed. But we found that we could talk about everything and anything. Then I had a very uncomfortable thought: to tell her about the sort of person I had been and the mistakes I had made, and the sort of person I still was. I felt absolutely terrible telling her these things, and she did not say very much. But when we got home, she looked at me in the bright light of the house and said, 'Well, I always thought you must have been a very good person, because you were so strict with us, but now I know differently.' ■

Rosemary Harding, aged 16

WHEN MY PARENTS became honest with me, it was difficult for me as well as for them. I realised that the image that I had had when I was growing up, of them not doing anything wrong and always knowing the answers, was a false image, and that they had made mistakes and were now sorry for them. Now they are two of my best friends as well as being my parents, which makes life a lot better. ■

A British man spoke with his wife:

I LIKE THE TERM 'TRANSPARENCY'. It means choosing to live so that people can look into the furthest corners of our lives and find them filled with light, not darkness. My wife and I lived together before we were married, a relationship

based on sex which soon began to disintegrate. The more sordid it became, the less satisfying it became. And we turned to alcohol to sustain us. We were rapidly becoming dependent on it. Then we met someone committed to MRA. We found a faith; we decided to live by absolute moral standards—honesty, purity, unselfishness and love—and we decided to be married.

After a year of marriage, I began to have a sense, which I resisted at first, that I should tell my wife about a wrong relationship that I had had before we even met. I kept telling myself it just was not relevant to our present relationship. But soon, just like a tap being turned off, I stopped getting any guidance from God. All that remained was one thought—to be honest with my wife. Eventually God gave me the courage and I told her. This set us off on a completely new road.

On another occasion, at a conference, I had to get straight with her again on a question of purity, which was not easy. On the same day I was able to share the story with a young man at the conference. He was on the verge of making a decision for Christ. He had not thought such honesty was possible. He found it so attractive that he gave his life to God there and then. ■

His wife added:

I FOUND IT PAINFUL TO ACCEPT his honesty. It is easy to feel hurt and sorry for myself. It gives me an excuse to point the finger and be self-righteous. I have a choice. I can forgive him unconditionally, which enriches our relationship and lets God in, or I can hold it against him and become an accusing and bitter wife. It is such a release when we are able to apologise and forgive. We feel this is the basis for unity and fellowship in our marriage. ■



Christopher, Rosemary, Anne and Shirley Harding

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and having to get to work or get a husband to work. But then we often spend the day feeling a victim of events and of our family. I feel sometimes 'the kids are eating me up'. Or we spend the day with a guilty conscience because we are 'doing our own thing'.

Quiet time in the evening, or when ironing, is good, but can get pushed out by other events. It can mean I am fitting God in when it suits me. (Also, it is important to tune a violin before the concert, not after!) Quiet time in the morning gives you wider perspective, helps you to be

ready, putting the day in God's hands. It gives one's family a chance to breathe without just being organised by mother. Although we at one time had twin babies and a two-year-old, we have always tried to stick to this time of quiet, sometimes just a few minutes in the early morning... and the children learn to respect it.

We were talking about this to a wife and teacher three weeks ago. She said, 'I had to be at school for a teacher's meeting at 7.30 am yesterday, and did so as a matter of course. If I can do that, I can set the alarm and get up for a quiet time which is much more important.' ■

HARDIE PLAY TOURS AUSTRALIA

INTEGRITY IS THE QUESTION of the hour in Australia. And a surprising figure from the past has been striding our cities to help clarify where it can be found.

Keir Hardie founded the British Labour Party. His struggle, as depicted in Henry Macnicol's play, *Keir Hardie—the man they could not buy*, has been seen up and down Britain and is now going out to the world on video. But in the last months, Donald Simpson, who plays Hardie, and several of the British cast brought the play itself to Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne and the industrial centre of Wollongong.

Integrity, you may well say, is a battle for all of us at each hour in every country. But Australia has been shaken recently by allegations and evidence of corruption involving national figures in politics, the judiciary and industry. Several of these men have had highly-publicised trials. Some are now in jail. And the Government recently arranged a national 'summit conference' on tax reform because of the urgent necessity to counter rampant tax evasion and avoidance.

Prosperity

Can there ever be trust, can even prosperity survive in the land without unshakeable standards among the people? Such questions, often scarcely put into words, seem to be a main reason why Hardie's passionate fight for justice and integrity have made an extraordinary mark here just now. The audiences have come from the entire width of the political spectrum and from both sides of industry. Press, radio and television have carried thoughtful interviews with the author and members of the cast.

As the play was about to be staged in Wollongong three Labor MPs in Sydney made an unexpected request for a performance in Parliament House one night during the dinner hour. A few days before it took place, the first item in a daily column on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* drew the city's attention to this unusual occasion at a moment when 'allegations of corruption fly furiously about State Parliament'. Over a third of the members came, from both sides of the House, and were commenting weeks afterwards about how stirred they were. A Liberal MP whose Christian convictions have made him determined to deal with corruption at the root, sent the script to the State Education Department with a request that it be put on the syllabus—and commented that since a Liberal was asking for a play about a Labor MP nobody could say it was politically motivated. Indeed, those on all sides have been quick to recognise that the play is a study of the aims and motives necessary for anyone in public life.

Regret

One of the State's leading politicians received cast members and said with regret that he would be out of town on the performance dates. But less than two hours before the final show he phoned to say he was back early and was coming with his wife, son and 17 from his department. As the family talked with members of the cast and audience afterwards, his wife quoted Hardie's lines, 'I've never even tried to be a leader—it's just been one long struggle to keep up with my conscience, that thing inside me that urges me on when



D. Mayor

Producer of 'The Man they could not buy', Harry Howlett, with police cadets after a performance in Melbourne.

everything else is longing to lie down and rest.' She added, 'We know that very well.'

In the Victorian Parliament, a Labor MP who had seen the show invited her entire Parliamentary party to lunch with the cast. At a time of some tension between different factions representatives of each, including the State Premier, came.

Australia is a huge land, afflicted, as one historian said, by 'the tyranny of distance'. So railways are enormously important in economic life. In two states, trade unionists whose faces were familiar on television for having many times been involved in disputes which had brought the railways to a halt were in the audiences. A special performance was given in a huge railway workshop complex, which a state cabinet minister had described a few days earlier as 'little Stalingrad'. But he had added, 'There are some good blokes there'.

Debate

After this performance, as the cast ate a sandwich lunch with their hosts, they heard in the background a passionate debate between a Trotskyite railwayman and a veteran Indian railways unionist, Satya Banerji, who had travelled to Australia for six weeks with the cast. Mr Banerji's experience of a lifetime's struggle in Calcutta touched a profound longing in many Australians to grapple with social inequalities in today's world. If you'd been at Sydney's Central Station one afternoon as the Indian Pacific, one of the world's great trains, set off to cross the whole width of the continent, you might have seen Mr Banerji sitting on the spare seat between the two engine drivers. Once well over the mountains he went back to the sleeping berth his union friends had made sure he had.

Dozens of prominent trade union men came to the play. One commented that there had not been 'a single false note' in the production. Another, who had also been a Senator, said it ought to be 'compulsory viewing' for every politician.

Two Commissioners of Police told members of the cast of their deep concern about drugs and other criminal influences at loose in the community. At two of the Melbourne showings buses brought large parties of police trainees to

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SALTY BOOK

A NEW BOOK IN WELSH, *Gwerth ein halen?* (Worth our salt?), which asks how Christians can be more effective, was launched at this year's Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales in Rhyl.

The Rev Roger Roberts, Superintendent Minister in the Llandudno Circuit of the Welsh-speaking Methodist Church, was the main speaker at the launching occasion. 'This book has a special contribution to make to the building up of Wales—a Wales which has dignity and grace and where the Spirit has right of way,' said Mr Roberts. He picked out three ways in which the book did this—by pointing the direction to take; by showing how to reach it; and by illustrating the consequences of reaching it. 'For me it is in the showing of the *how* that the book is especially important,' declared Mr Roberts, who is also prospective Alliance candidate for the Conwy constituency and a recent President of the Welsh Liberal Party. 'Even we preachers seldom go into that. Taking time to be quiet with God each morning is one key.' As a typical 'over-busy' man he was particularly struck by a sentence of Frank Buchman's quoted in the book—'If you give time to God, God gives you enough time.'

'This is a book to ponder over in quiet meditation,' writes Dr G O Williams, the former Archbishop of Wales, in the introduction. 'In it you get the experiences of people whose lives have been revolutionised by God, and this has enabled them to be channels for changing things in society for the better.'

These experiences include those of a politician who made obedience to God's direction a priority, a trade unionist, a top European industrialist, an Irish campaigner for reconciliation between Catholic and Protestant, a diplomat and a 'priest in a suitcase'.

Gwerth ein halen? is edited by Paul Williams, who works with MRA, and the Rev E H Griffiths of Rhyl. Mr Griffiths, a member of the Literary Committee of the Eisteddfod, has recently retired from the Methodist ministry. The book was on sale throughout the week of the Eisteddfod at the Moral Re-Armament stand.



The cast of 'Tro'i'n ôl'

Showing at the Eisteddfod 'Fringe' was *Troi'n ôl*, the Welsh version of *Return Trip*. This play, by Alan Thornhill and Hugh Steadman Williams, is the story of a reformed drug addict trying to get back into everyday life. *The Rhyl Journal and Advertiser* quotes Paul Williams as saying that the play gives a Christian dimension to the drugs problem.

The two performances were made possible by grants from the North Wales Hospital at Denbigh, which has a special drug addiction unit, and from the Bishop of St Asaph's Social Fund. The Bishop, Alwyn Rice-Jones, is Chairman of the newly established Clwyd Drugs Council. The Clwyd Education Authority gave the use of the theatre at Glan Clwyd High School without charge because of the importance of the play's theme.

'The message of the play comes across so naturally and unforced,' commented Bishop Rice-Jones after the final performance. Also present were the Rev Dafydd Owen, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, and his wife. His Church has given particular support to the staging of the play in Wales. He now intends to encourage use of the hour-long video which has been made of the play.

Y Cymro, the Welsh-language weekly, headed a story about the play, 'Dealing with the effects of a contemporary problem.'

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the theatre. The second group brought a list of questions they would have to answer. One referred to the four attempts in the play to give Hardie some inducement to do what he knew he should not. Later, the police college phoned to ask for the video for those who had not managed to see the live performance.

The cast has now scattered to different parts of Australia and back to Europe with a sense of astonishment at all that happened in so short a time. The response from the hundreds who met the cast, after the play, in churches, offices, workshops, factories and homes left no doubt about

the significance of what it has said to them. *Hardie's* quality of living and leadership nearly a century ago drew out of them a longing to discover a big enough purpose and a commitment to integrity.

Don Simpson commented, 'They have responded to the story of a man who stirred men and women not with bitterness but with a hope that united them. People are deeply concerned about what is missing in society. Political adjustments and social experiments have not solved the deeper problems. Without a moral compass an affluent society may avoid certain difficulties but run into many more.'

John Williams

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NEWS**

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