



Initiatives of Change

Caux, Monday 14th July 2003

Dear friends,

The first conference has come and gone. The second - the 2003 *Caux Conference for Business and Industry*, on the theme: 'Globalization . . . as if people really mattered', ends tomorrow. This year marks their 30th meeting, and they seem to be going from strength to strength. And their successors are already arriving for the family conference, *From conflict to community at home*; the number of children is rising, and the average age is dropping. The Caux Scholars have been arriving, and their programme is just starting too. The house-count has been steadily rising – it is now well over the 350 mark. And the fine, hot weather continues, day after day, allowing us to eat outside.

Those who have been logging on to the Caux Web site will have seen a rapidly expanding list of press releases going up, reflecting the level and variety of the speakers – we are sending them along with the paper copy of this letter. One of this year's speakers – the Director of Ethics and Business Conduct at Boeing's commercial aircraft division in Seattle – came last year for the first time, and having 'met' IC and Caux on the Internet (see more of what she said on the Caux site). With the improved IC web presence, this is surely something that we'll see a lot more of. I was encouraged by the reaction of a journalist from the regional Montreux paper, now a friend of the house and its ideas, who was really excited and impressed by the level of dialogue in Caux, notably around the problems of globalization. The dialogue between the Davos World Economic Forum, and the World Social Forum of Porto Alegre was for him Caux at its best.

With a comfortably full programme and a comfortably full house, this conference is the result of a fruitful teamwork between the new-ish *Caux Initiatives for Business* team, *Hope in the Cities*, and the *International Communications Forum* and the *Junior Round Table*. There's a certain feel of relaxation, but also of serious issues, discussed seriously, with time and space for the dimensions of personal change and personal responsibility. And I'm even more aware than usual that I'm only seeing and taking part in a small percentage of what's going on in the house. Yesterday while working on press releases, and then translating for the ICF, I missed seminars on the impact of AIDS on business, and the social responsibilities of business' in the pandemic, and another seminar on corruption with one of the Swiss chapter of Transparency International. As the person responsible for the Caux bookshop, I was happy to see that the conference organizers gave all participants a list or recommended reading in their documentation packs on arrival. And by a 'miracle', copies of Brian Lightowler's new book *Corruption – who cares?* arrived at long last from Australia just in time.

Those in the house have been kept informed by the *Caux Digest*, a daily A4 two-sided sheet, arriving on our tables at breakfast, and carrying reports of the previous day. This mornings reported that the *Junior Round Table* participants, returning last night from their now-traditional fondue at the Col de Jaman, had been held up by a car accident on the narrow, winding mountain road – but there was no serious damage to people!

This is such an amazing community. I share an office with the newly hired Secretary-General of the Caux Foundation, and so am on the receiving end of many questions, and am learning to look at this venture through his fresh eyes. It works because there are so many people who have taken on their part, and who quietly find their team to do it. Listing particular people is always deadly dangerous, since there's always someone to be left off, who could feel hurt. So

I'm not going to try to list all the parts of the house, and all the teams (you find them on the Caux planning reports).

One example is Maria Wolf from Germany who is a professional translator and interpreter (the former do written translations, the latter do simultaneous interpretation from the booths). For 5 years now, she has recruited, trained and supervised five or six teams, covering the whole of the conferences, without whom we'd find it very hard to understand each other, particularly now that Russian is becoming an increasingly common language in Caux. She has maintained links with those who've had previous experience here, so that friends of friends keep on coming, and she also developed relationships with schools and universities where these skills are taught, offering practical experience, in return for their stay.

Spiritual leaders were present among us – the Caux Round Table asked thinkers from the Jewish and Islamic faiths to join a Catholic Cardinal in presenting their traditions' contribution to 'the moral imperatives of social justice'. In their three days of meetings, they renewed their links with their starting place, and searched for greater clarity on their contribution to 'globalization with a human face'.

For the Christians among us, we've had our first two Sundays with their church services. Yesterday, one of the ministers from the local parish came up, and in teamwork, we offered interpretation into English for the majority of the congregation who came from the conference. Last Sunday there was one of the amazing mixes of Caux ecumenism – an Australian Uniting church minister, with a Dutch woman Mennonite, and two Romanian Orthodox priests. In two weeks time, the Caux protestant service will be broadcast live on the French-speaking Swiss radio, and I have the strange experience of seeing my name up on a poster, announcing me as the preacher! Daily, just before lunch, a few gather to pray for the community here with all its cares and needs.

The first conference, on *Service, Responsibility and Leadership*, ended with a variety evening in the Great Hall, music, magic, sketches. The Caux Round Table final dinner was brought to a close with Moldovan and Scottish dancing outside on the terrace. Some of them joined in, as did the senior Rabbi who was one of their guest speakers, but the Catholic cardinal had already left! The Fitzwilliam String Quartet, on top of their planned concerts in Caux, also enriched a 'gap evening' between the two conferences with impromptu music. Their final concert on Saturday evening, they gave the world premier of new work by Carolyn Sparey, Jonathon's sister, *The Mystic Ring*, inspired by the life and work of the great English potter Bernard Leach. A haunting work. For me, there's the 'I need to listen to it again' meaning 'perhaps I *may* start to like it if I hear it again', and an excitement of 'I look forward to getting even more out of another hearing'. I think many, like myself, look forward to hearing it again, in the second mode! And Carolyn was present to take the applause, and then to play with the Quartet in Bruckner's string Quintet for the second part of the programme.

It was another evening of magic, in the bay window of the Great Hall, facing out towards that amazing view, with the windows wide open, and the light slowly fading, the colours changing to orange, red and then purple. There was a false start, as the gentle breeze turned the pages of music on the musicians' stands, and a window had to be closed, and there was the noise of a train arriving, of voices outside – and the intensity of relating to live artists and live music that is so different from sometimes aseptic perfection of the CD. Such 'live' encounters, with people, with situations – and with sounds – are so much at the heart of Caux.

Sunny greetings from our sunny mountainside,

Andrew Stallybrass