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'I hope I'm not burdening you', said Andrew Stallybrass, as he left Caux last week for a fortnight away, and suggested that I consider writing this weekly letter. 'Not burdened but bemused,' I might have said if I'd had my wits about me.

This glorious place has not yet been as full as sometimes, though it soon will be during the Agenda for Reconciliation and the Politicians' Round Table. The views are as magnificent as ever, the weather has been pleasant on the whole, and important things have been going on.

This time last week the current session of the Caux Round Table was just winding up. As well as leading businessmen from 10 countries, the sessions this year were attended by representatives of the OECD, the UN, the ILO and the World Bank. The Round Table's Chairman, Mr Win Wallin, told the press that it was 'committed to promoting principled business leadership through the development of national action groups around the world'.

From July 19 - 22 a meeting convened by Charles Piguet, Andrew Stallybrass and Edward Howard considered all aspects of MRA publishing. Technology is presenting us with potent possibilities. It is no longer necessary for economic reasons, for instance, to produce large editions of books. Titles can be kept in print even if they are not in great demand, and expensive space is not needed to keep available the great classics of our calling. Caux Edition, the publishing house based here, is producing reprints in French, German and English of only 50 copies each of the great Swiss psychologist Paul Tournier's last book, 'A Listening Ear'. Further books are in this pipeline.

The Internet, of course, is the technical development of greatest potential, and a World Wide Web Consultation Group has been formed 'to provide management, advice and co-ordination for the MRA websites, with the support of MRA bodies'. Some of us still find the technology somewhat bewildering, but the fact is that we now have easier chances to reach the millions, and great imagination, flair and technical skill will be needed to make the most of them.

Even more vital than technology to MRA's future is a session now in full swing called, 'Life, Faith and Fellowship'. This has been organised for those committed to MRA by a group headed by Annejet Campbell and Anne-Marie Tate, and 280 people have come from all directions to take part. 'My hope,' said Annejet at the opening, 'is that this week we can all be a freshly-dug garden where we make room for the Creator to drop his seeds where he wants. To be renewed, refreshed, reconciled — to come with empty hands, ready and eager to learn new things, to laugh and cry together, to listen to each other and to the feelings behind the words.' She quoted Mother Mary Clare of Oxford, who said, 'This is an age in which the cloth is being unwoven. It is therefore no good trying to patch. We must rather set up the loom on which coming generations may weave new cloth according to the pattern God provides.'

This session is only half over, so the rest of the story must wait till the next letter. Alan Channer will also write a full report. Suffice to say that it is a canny mixture of depth and hilarity. Last Saturday evening the terrace was alive to the sound of Scottish dancing. Then we spent Sunday on a trip by bus and boat to and from the ancient town of St Maurice in the Rhone Valley on the direct route between Geneva and Rome. There a beautiful abbey commemorates the martyrdom of an

entire Roman legion of some 6600 men who refused to obey the orders of the Emperor Maximilian to slaughter fellow Christians. A series of churches has been built on the spot, and we walked through catacombs and around foundations of these buildings that have recently been excavated. A community of monks have been there since 515AD, and it was a wonderful illustration of the continuity of faith.

The main spiritual input in this session is being provided by a series of six talks at 9.30 am, the first three of which are being given by a Jesuit Father, Frank Ramsperger, on the theme, 'The joy of a new start'. He has based these on the spiritual exercises of St Ignatius Loyola in the 16th Century. Before he started I was a little cautious, knowing of the rigorous intellectual discipline of the Jesuits. But Fr Ramsperger, a Canadian who has worked for many years in the Lebanon, has a delightful sense of humour, which kept bouncing forth in phrases like: 'Some of us have fled temptation but left a forwarding address'.

'There's a story of two building workers,' he said, 'who used to eat their sandwich lunch together. One of them kept complaining that all his sandwiches had sardines in them. After a month of this, his friend said, "If you don't like sardines, why don't you ask your wife to make you some other kind of sandwiches?" "For one thing", came the reply, "I'm not married. And when there are sandwiches to be made, I make them". So often,' Fr Ramsperger concluded, 'we are the cause of the evil of which we complain.'

He told dozens of such stories, and I will include one more, about a nun who had felt very inferior but found an experience of God's love for her. 'Every morning,' she said, 'I look in the mirror and say, "Annabel, you're beautiful." And then I put in my teeth.'

This year's Caux scholars, 17 of them, have come for a variety of reasons: one because of the transformation of a twin sister who participated last year; another because he has felt empty and concerned that his negotiating style at work is too aggressive and reactive; another because she has only recently begun to find freedom from the hatred she felt at having to flee from Croatia and at knowing that someone else now occupies her home and sleeps in her bed. One student works with former child soldiers in Liberia, one is a political refugee from Algeria who has lost several close friends, and among others are teachers, a lawyer and volunteers with international organisations. They are full of energy and a desire to make a difference in their situations and have launched into their study and life at Caux with enthusiasm. Two '95 scholars have returned as interns, and are helping Dr Barry Hart, Sam Doe, Michelle LeBaron and Randy Ruffin run the program.

As well as all else, there have been two meetings this week about MRA's structures. The first was a two-day meeting bringing together members of 22 of the 31 operating Councils, Boards and Trusts which carry the legal organisations of MRA in different countries. It was an invaluable chance to compare notes on the various legal requirements and the different situations in which these bodies exist and have been set up. The second was a representative meeting to choose members of the International Co-ordinating Group (soon to be replaced by a new International Co-ordinating Council, as agreed at the Jamaica Consultation in April).

By this time next week I will be on a plane to Australia. So someone else will soon be surprised by the chance to write the next letter.

With warmest wishes, John Williams