

## Land use and democracy

**M**y professional field of architecture and planning has given me a lively concern for land use and the environment. This inspired me to propose that this July's Caux Conference for Business and Industry at the MRA centre in Switzerland should include a forum on environment, ecology and sustainable development.

Half a century of so-called central planning has left post-communist countries like my own, Poland, with a negative legacy of costly, unusable industry, bad housing and weak, decrepit infrastructure. 'The land has suffered beyond imagination,' as a Czech architect wrote in 1995. But this misdevelopment has also left pockets of biodiversity, forgotten tracts of wilderness impossible to find in the west of Europe.

This seems to offer the sustainable development opportunity of one's dreams. Poland's post-1989 constitution describes sustainable development as a principle of economic development. Planning regulations are strongly oriented toward environmental protection. Environmental assessment procedures are part of the investment process.

We have information about the big development mistakes committed in the 1950s-70s in the West. They were based on such misconceptions as 'all transport problems will be solved by private cars', 'all you can sell has to be sold', 'growth at any price'. Sadly, the emerging democracies of Central and Eastern Europe are stepping in the same footprints. Nowadays western cities are working hard at maintaining natural reserves, cleaning up waterways and lakes and restoring to their natural condition rivers dammed in the beautiful 1960s.

### Selling off nature

In practice, land use policies in Poland are not as good as they look on paper. At the local level elected officials are usually in coalition with business and no one represents the interests of the community. The results are growth above all, selling what can be sold, proposals to organize the Winter Olympics in the tiny (in comparison to the Alps) national park of the Tatra Mountains and to construct new dams on the Vistula river. The World Wide Fund for Nature calls the Vistula 'the aging queen' and lists it as one of five great European rivers that should be preserved in the semi-natural state they still enjoy.

City and town governments are selling all the land they can to developers—sometimes getting rid of forest, meadows and fields. They are selling off 'ecological subdivisions'—mostly on land that should be protected for



by Joanna Giecwicz

the use of the community—and reducing existing parks and nature reserves on the grounds that they are 'an obstacle to development'. The Director of the Tatra National Park has been dubbed an 'enemy of progress and civilization' by the politicians, because he had the stamina to say 'no' to the idea of the Winter Olympics and constantly opposes further development of ski resorts there.

One dangerous aspect of all this is the attempt made to conceal information about

### 'environmental activities are helping civil society to develop'

proposed investment and to reduce public participation in the planning process to a purely theoretical possibility.

Public awareness of the problems is growing fast. Local politicians are perceived as representing the short-term business-oriented view. As a result there have been a number of organized protests by people who feel they are not informed, not consulted and have no positive legal way to express their point of view and participate in the process. These environmental activities are helping a civil society to develop—a concept that had really been destroyed by the communist regime.

I have been involved personally through

sharing my knowledge with my students in the architecture department of the Warsaw Technical University, through writing in my local newspaper and through organizing protests.

The first of these related to the construction of a large private house on a beautiful riverside meadow. It was a wetland of exceptional natural value, which should have been reserved for public enjoyment and use. Three years of action by local people, and of appeals to every possible regional and national institution, ended in complete failure. The house has been finished and is a blight on that small river valley.

### Stewardship

The second case concerned attempts to prevent housing development in an area where there were wells for drinking water. It followed much the same track as the protest against the house—three years of totally unsuccessful activities—but many more people were involved. On the way, however, we managed to stop a petrol station being constructed in our village.

Our community was founded 70 years ago as a kind of garden-, or rather forest-, city, close to the suburbs of Warsaw. Last summer we organized an exhibition of its history, and many people came to visit it. Preparing the exhibition brought the community together to discuss the events of the past, the problems of today and to plan for the future. This helped to build positive attitudes towards our own place.

When I began to think about the environmental forum in Caux, such words as stewardship, unselfish action, motivation, interactive insight came to mind. They define what is needed. The attitude of stewardship allows us to use the Earth's gifts without destroying them and to remember that we do not own them. That leads on to the idea of unselfish action, which is based on understanding that the Earth's riches exist for the common good and that it is our duty to use them sustainably.

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### NEXT ISSUE

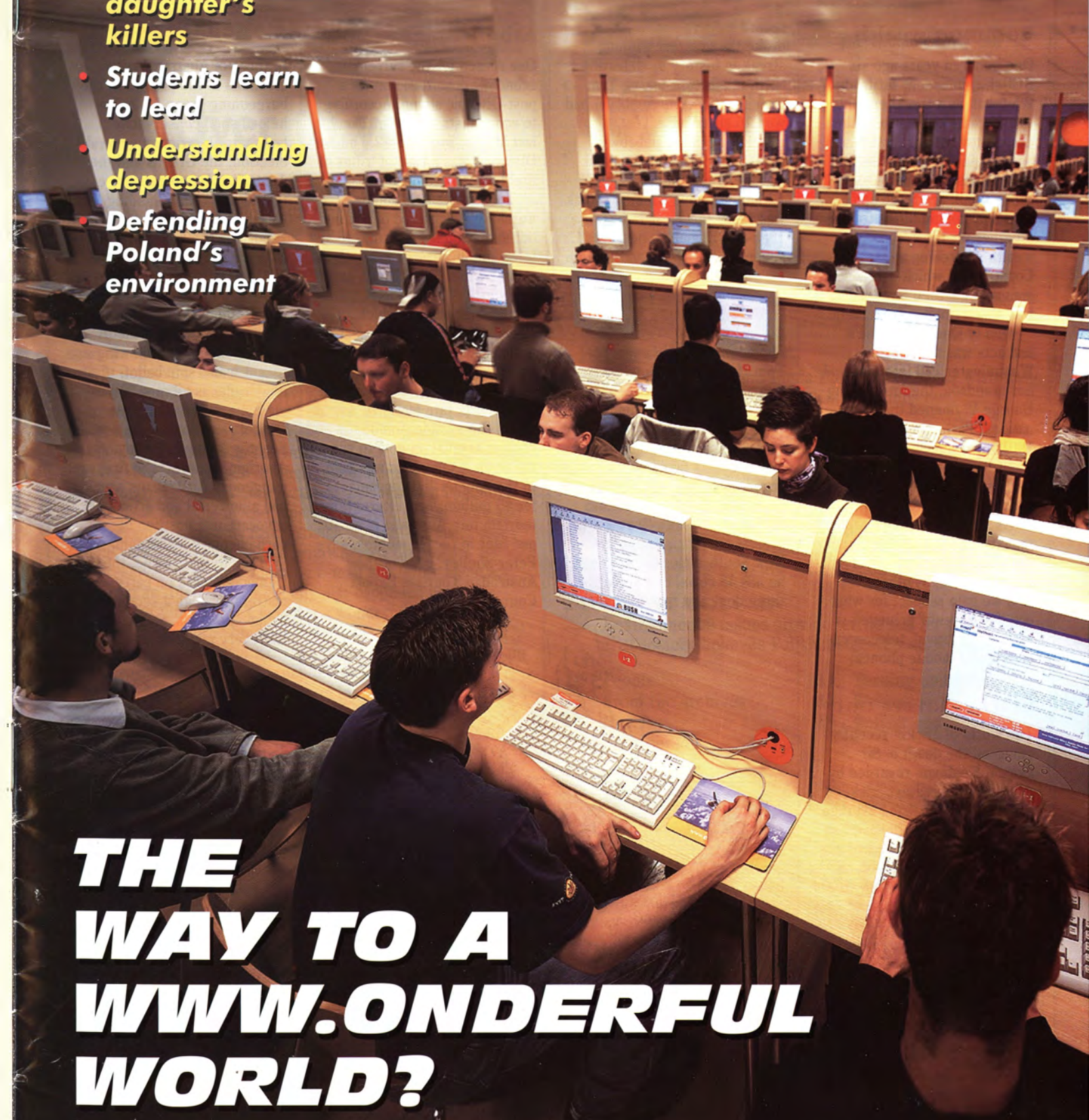
**Lead story:** FAC looks at how the media in Bush's America exercise their power.  
**Profile:** Dutch diplomat turned peace prophet, Edy Korthais Altes

# FORA CHANGE

Volume 14 Number 3

June/July 2001

- Meeting their daughter's killers
- Students learn to lead
- Understanding depression
- Defending Poland's environment



## THE WAY TO A WWW. ONDERFUL WORLD?

by Christopher Mayor in Melbourne



**Common wealth**

One hundred years ago six British colonies, as far from Whitehall as a traveller could sail, became one nation—the Commonwealth of Australia.

It required vast vision and statesmanship to persuade these small, scattered and parochial communities to join together for their 'common wealth'. Agreeing a Constitution which overrode jealously guarded State rights was also a great achievement.

One of Queen Victoria's last acts was to sign the Westminster Bill into law, and her grandson, the future King George V, opened the first national Parliament on 9 May 1901 in Melbourne. The event was re-enacted by the present Parliament in the same venue, exactly 100 years later.

As we look back, we are thankful that we did not have to suffer a debilitating war of independence, as others did. And we gain respect for what our 'foreparents' achieved—without air travel, teleconferencing and mobile phones!

**Cricket lovers only**

The world of cricket recently mourned the death of Sir Donald Bradman, regarded by many as the greatest cricketer ever. His Test batting average was 99.94. He would have had an average of 100 if he had not scored an ignominious 'duck' (zero) in his final innings. His nearest challengers have averages in the 60s.

Australia's current Test cricketers have also been

record holders—until India broke the greatest winning streak in history by defeating them in a breath-taking Test match last March. Australia had won 16 successive Test matches against Zimbabwe, Pakistan, India, New Zealand and the West Indies.

The previous winning streak was 11 by the West Indies in 1983–85. England's best was seven (in the 1880s and 1920s).

**High flying Crowe**

Australia's New Zealand-born film actor Russell Crowe beat Tom Hanks and fellow Australian Geoffrey Rush for this year's Oscar for his lead role in *Gladiator*.

Australia's low dollar (now worth around 50 cents) is attracting big-budget Hollywood movies to its film production studios. This suits Crowe, who prefers to work close to his New South Wales farm, where he has 48 cows, one horse, three dogs and five chickens.



**Athens, please note**

One reason for the current economic downturn may be a post-Olympic slump. According to economists quoted in *The Age* last March, Sydney's \$2.6 billion Olympics was a case of 'rings of fire' for many companies.

Too many sat at home watching TV instead of getting out and spending. Business telecommunications were down. Qantas Chief Geoff Dixon says 'corporate Australia took a holiday for four weeks' which reduced the airline's domestic performance. (Another factor was the introduction of a new tax which created uncertainty in the corporate world.)

On the up side, the 35-volume manual on how to run the Sydney Olympics was sold to the Athens 2004 organizers for \$5 million. And international tourism into Australia is up 40 per cent in recent months, says Peter Shelley, head of the Australian Tourism Export Council.

**Balancing act**

In three of Australia's state elections in the past year, the burgeoning green lobby has helped spoil conservative hopes. In the coming general election, the Greens and the Australian Democrats are contesting the role of holding the balance of power between Labor and the Liberal-National coalition parties. The Democrats were formed several years ago under the leadership of a dissident Liberal in order, as he put it, 'to keep the bastards honest'. Following a recent leadership ballot, their new leader is vibrant 32-year-old Senator Natasha Stott Despoja and deputy chair is Senator Aiden Ridgeway, an Aboriginal lawyer: the first time indigenous Australians have had a powerful and articulate advocate in a position of parliamentary leadership.

True to their name, the Democrats vote on party matters through a secret postal ballot—no deals, no factions and every member has a say.

**Power to librarians**

Richard Neville, a law-breaking editor of *Oz* magazine in the Sixties, is now a well-known and sober futurist. At a recent international meeting, he spoke of the up- and downsides of the information revolution. 'The only sensible way to look at the world is that it is getting better and better and worse and worse quicker and quicker,' he said. Reshaping an old slogan, he said: 'If knowledge was power, librarians would rule the world.' ■



Cover: Internet surfers at the largest cybercafé in the world. Photo: Easy Everything

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Over to you

In the first edition of *For A Change* one of the editors, John Williams, wrote: 'With real transformations in attitudes, aims and relationships, we can confidently plan to deal with the deadlock between East and West, the chasm between North and South, the deadly threat to the environment. Without this element we cannot realistically expect much at all.'

Apart from showing how history has moved on—and a case can be made that transformed attitudes played a major role in improving the still prickly East-West relationship—Williams' words point to the central thrust of *FAC*'s editorial approach. Today, some 13 years on, we still reckon to illustrate where changes in people's behaviour are leading to changes for the better in the world.

We receive feedback through readers' letters, and increasingly via e-mail. One result of the improved communication made possible by the World Wide Web is that more and more people are reading *FAC* articles on-line—in many cases people who have never seen a printed copy. Comments we have received in recent weeks by e-mail and letter include:

From an Australian: 'I've only just happened upon this website and think *For A Change* is a wonderful benevolent way of addressing the fundamental essence of "human being".' And from a reader in Eritrea, 'When I by chance picked up your magazine and began to read the articles I was surprised because I seldom find such issues of human importance printed or discussed exclusively.'

Putting our articles on the Web is comparatively cheap. Yet, due to the 'digital divide', many millions of people have no access to *FAC* online—and have no prospect of being able to afford the 'hard' copy.

In each issue of *FAC* we have printed a notice saying that we welcome donations so that universities, libraries and individuals in Africa, the West Indies, the Pacific and central and eastern Europe who have no hard currency can be sent subscriptions. We are grateful to those readers who have sent gifts, and hope that more will do so. Again, we have letters from the recipients of these subsidized subscriptions that show how much the magazine is appreciated.

We always welcome any word from readers who have found inspiration from *FAC*, and particularly news of any initiatives that have resulted. In each future issue we plan to print a fresh quote from a reader who has appreciated *FAC*.

The Editors

FOR A CHANGE

- closes the circle between faith and action, action and faith. It is for anyone, anywhere, who wants to make a difference to the world.
- **FOR A CHANGE** believes
- that in a world torn by ancient hatreds, the wounds of history can be healed.
- that in the family and the workplace, relationships can be transformed.
- that in urban jungle or rural backwater, community can be built.
- that peace, justice and the survival of the planet depend on changes in attitudes as well as structures.
- **FOR A CHANGE**
- draws its material from a wide range of sources and was born out of the experience of Moral Re-Armament.

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A NOTE ON MORAL RE-ARMAMENT

Moral Re-Armament was launched in 1938 when Europe was rearming. Frank Buchman, MRA's American initiator, called for a programme of 'moral and spiritual rearmament' to address the root causes of conflict, and work towards a 'hate-free, fear-free, greed-free world'. Since then people of all backgrounds and traditions have been active in this programme on every continent.

MRA is open to all. Its starting point is the readiness of each person to make real in their own life the changes they wish to see in society. A commitment to search for God's will in daily life forms the basis for creative initiative and common action. Absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love help to focus the challenge of personal and global change.

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A selection from the ever-growing number of web pages

The Internet is already changing many people's lives, but the IT revolution is only just starting. Should the world be grateful or worried, asks Mike Lowe.

If, like me, you routinely use the Internet to exchange emails, find information on the World Wide Web and occasionally take advantage of other on-line services, then you are part of a massive wave of change that is sweeping the world. Marketing firm Global Reach estimates that 391 million people worldwide already use the Internet, and the figure is projected to reach 774 million by 2003. Of those currently 'wired', 169 million are US citizens—over 60 per cent of the population. In Britain, half of all adults have Internet access either at work or home, with numbers still rising rapidly. But the fastest take-up is in China—currently 40.7 million, and set to quadruple in the next two years.

The technology too is rapidly advancing. A phenomenon in the computing industry known as 'Moore's law' states that every 18 months the computing power per dollar quadruples.

As with the advent of the telephone, the value of the service rises as more people join. In developed countries, it seems realistic to assume that almost everyone will have access to the Internet in the not too distant future, though there is concern about the minority who, for lack of money or skills, are left out.

A report for the British Government by Booz-Allen and Hamilton Associates in March 2000, recommended setting targets to ensure that at least 70 per cent of individuals in the UK used the Internet on a regular basis by 2003. They wrote: 'While the UK has become Europe's leading e-commerce market, research shows an emerging "digital divide" that threatens to leave 20 million people excluded from the "knowledge economy" in three years time, a gulf with severe economic, educational and social implications.'

Once universal access is more or less achieved, what kind of world will emerge? Is the Internet any different from previous tools of communication? According to Brian Reid, one of the pioneers of the Internet and author of *The Church and the Internet*, there are some fundamental differences. For



Cartoon Stock Library

example, psychological studies have shown that people feel less inhibited typing into a computer than when meeting people face to face, so they are more likely to share secrets, or write offensive things. And because messages can easily be copied and passed on, it is more difficult to keep secrets on the Internet (though it is often easier to trace the leak).

Dr Reid also notes that the Internet

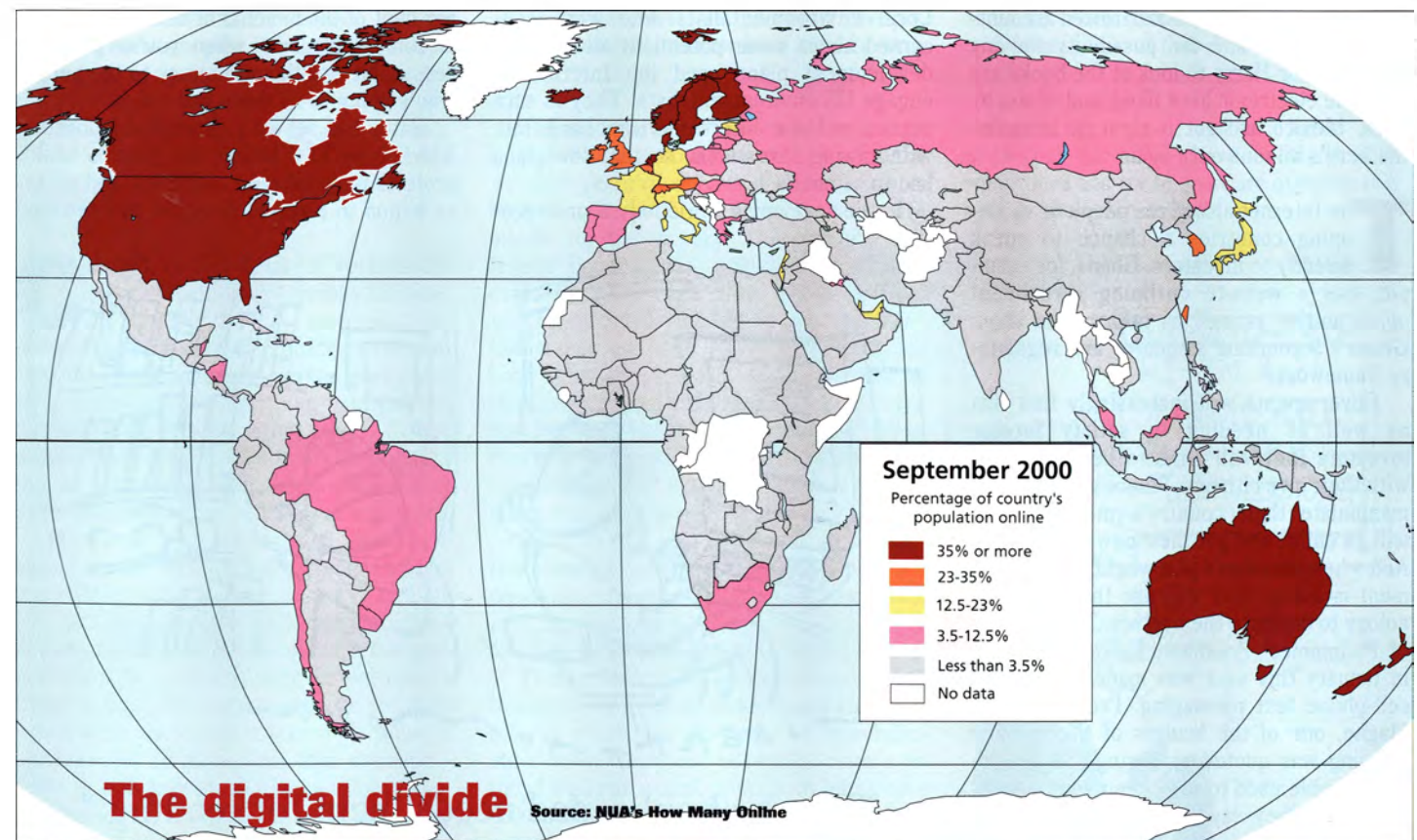
makes it easy to communicate simultaneously with many others, no matter how far away they are; to import material that is illegal or obscene; to pose as somebody that you are not (paedophiles try to attract real teenagers by posing as teenagers online while police try to catch the paedophiles by posing as teenagers).

As Reid points out, technology itself doesn't change things but it 'changes the possibility or price of things, and people then change the world'.

The Internet is already greatly increasing the mobility of money and investments. The stock markets, once the preserve of the wealthy, are now open to anyone at little cost through online brokers.

Many individual savers, the big banks, pension funds and all the players on the financial services market are also using the Internet. The result is that money is being moved around the world at a greater rate than ever before as the 'electronic herd', to use a phrase of Thomas Friedman in *The Lexus and the olive tree\**, chases the best return. He writes, 'If the herd comes your way, it can, in short order, rain billions and billions of dollars on your country's stock

\**The Lexus and the olive tree* by Thomas Friedman, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, USA, 1999.



# THE WAY TO A WONDERFUL WORLD?



## THE WAY TO A WWWONDERFUL WORLD?

and bond markets, as well as directly into the plants and factories.' But when the herd gets worried about its investments it 'can transform what might have been a brutal but limited market adjustment downward into something much more painful and exaggerated, and it can also transmit instability much more quickly between markets, and from bad markets to good markets.'

Such a panic hit Mexico in 1995, sending the currency into free-fall as investors pulled out of the country almost overnight.

The 'herd' doesn't like surprises. Nowadays, South Korea's Ministry of Finance, for example, sends out an e-mail to global investors detailing its currency reserves at the end of each business day. Greater transparency, standardized accounting procedures and the possibility for any Tom, Dick or Harry to look at the books are what the electronic herd likes, and when, in 1998, Mexico had got it right, it attracted the herd's billions once again.

The Internet also gives people in developing countries a chance to speak directly to investors. Ghana, for example, has a website outlining investment opportunities as well as information about Ghana's accounting standards and regulatory framework.

Governments will increasingly find that as well as needing to satisfy foreign investors they will have to be more open with their own citizens. Where governments manipulate their country's media, people will go online and get their news elsewhere. And when they don't like what their government is doing, they will use the new technology to organize themselves. The downfall of Philippines' President Estrada's regime in January this year was made possible by cell-phone text messaging. Professor Alex Magno, one of the leaders of this popular uprising was quoted as saying, 'In revolutions people used to say "keep your powder dry", now they say "keep your cell-phone charged".'



Filipinos organize protests against President Estrada using cellular phones.

For those who want it, the Internet gives access to the best information, and the possibility of communicating with others locally or around the world. It enables what Friedman calls 'super-empowered individuals' who can campaign effectively on a variety of issues. He cites the example of the Pantanal, a vast nature reserve in Brazil. Local environmentalists who were concerned about some potentially destructive development plans used the Internet to engage US environmentalists. They in turn pressurized the Inter-American Bank into withdrawing investment so that the plans had to be shelved.

In the developing world only a small por-

tion of people have access to the Internet. This has led to concern about a world-wide digital divide. But at a conference in October 2000 on 'Creating Digital Dividends', sponsored by the Washington, DC-based World Resources Institute, Microsoft boss Bill Gates made the point that other priorities come first. 'About 99 per cent of the benefits of having [a personal computer] come when you've provided reasonable health and literacy to the person who's going to sit down and use it.'

Gates has set up a charitable foundation which gave \$1.2 billion last year to health projects in developing countries, and another billion to projects designed to overcome



"They're books, dad needs them for reading."

**FOR A CHANGE**  
Leading history • Transforming relationships • Building community

April/July 2001

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the digital divide in the USA.

The digital divide in developed countries will become increasingly significant as more and more access to public services is routed through the Internet. Governments have been quick to grasp the potential benefits of the Internet and it is now possible to access many public documents and even fill in licence applications and tax-returns online. The primaries for the recent US Presidential election saw the world's first legally binding Internet voting in Arizona and Alaska.

John Chambers, President of Cisco, which makes much of the technology that powers the Web, predicts that the Internet will 'level the playing field' of the next Presidential election. Candidates will be able to reach people with their message

## Changing the culture

Computers enable us to work faster, more efficiently and do jobs that previously we had to employ other people to do. But are we getting too dependent on them? When the server goes down on a company network it can paralyse the business for hours, sometimes days. We can come to rely on our PCs to such an extent that an unexpected hard disk crash and consequent data loss can be a personal disaster.

The younger generation particularly have seized on the extraordinary communication possibilities of the Internet. Using Telnet, my son joins chat groups on philosophy which he is studying for A-level. He conducts live conversations by keyboard with, for example, a friend in Japan. By opening a second and third 'window' on his computer screen he conducts simultaneous conversations with correspondents in Los Angeles and India—global communication, at the speed of light and all for the price of a local phone call.

## Do you copy me?

Intellectual property is a notion that has existed since the renaissance. The idea that the inventor of an idea, an artist, author or a composer can 'own' (and thereby profit from) the fruits of his or her creativity is enshrined in a variety of laws around the world.

Unfortunately, once intellectual property exists in a digital form—whether computer software, books, music, video or still pictures—it becomes all too easy to copy. Digital copies are almost cost-free and suffer no loss of quality.

When DVD technology was launched the entertainment industry, concerned about potential copying, encrypted it so that DVD movies could be played but not copied. Inevitably it was only a short time before someone hacked the code and now you can



freely download 'DVD ripping software' and copy the movie.

When copying onto video or audio cassettes first became possible there were plenty of prophets of doom who forecast the end of revenues from music or films. Yet this has not happened because it does not cost much more to buy legal (nicely packaged) products than illegal copies.

Software producers are learning from this. The next generation of Microsoft Windows, for example, will be sold on a subscription basis: after a low initial payment you keep paying and get up-grades and customer support in return. Publishing and the

entertainment industry might take a similar route. Instead of selling a once-only product, they may enter into a relationship with their customers so that books, for example, may be published in instalments on a subscription basis—possibly with regular updates based on customer feedback.

using much smaller amounts of money.

For the ordinary citizen there are already many new opportunities to engage in the democratic process. In Britain, both local and national government websites give detailed information about policies and proposals and invite participation in the debate.

Business, too, faces big changes. Information and communications technology has reduced the edge that large companies used to enjoy, as even the smallest company can now advertise its products cheaply. Small advances in know-how have become

all important as they can give the edge over rivals—giving rise to the 'knowledge economy'. One positive result is that it is possible to have economic growth without actually producing more things (thus reducing the environmental impact).

The knowledge economy may look a little different from traditional economies. The authors of *The cluetrain manifesto*, possibly the first case of a website spawning a best-selling book, proclaim 'the end of business as usual'. Their premise is that markets are conversations, and that people will increas-

The media is full of stories of the romantic possibilities of the Internet and again the younger generation have not been slow in exploiting its potential. However there are pitfalls for the unwary. The son of a colleague conducted a long and passionate exchange of e-mails with a girl in Ohio which concluded with her flying over to the UK at her mother's expense to meet the boy. Almost as soon as they met at Heathrow airport they realized to their dismay that they had totally misread each other over the Internet. Much of the subtlety of human-to-human communication is lost in electronic messages.

Even in this era of e-mail and video-conferencing, politicians, businessmen and diplomats travel the world for important meetings because hearts and minds can only be changed by talking face to face.

To negotiate with a fellow human one has to understand needs, motivations and aspirations which can so easily be misunderstood over electronic networks. Shame on those who use e-mail or faxes to break off a relationship or fire their staff. Technology is not inherently a good or a bad thing, but it is

changing our culture and our habits at a whirlwind pace. We have to stand back sometimes and try to be aware of where it is leading us in our personal lives.

Philip Carr





## THE WAY TO A WWW. ONDERFUL WORLD?

ingly want to conduct that conversation in a human voice, rather than listening to 'corporate-speak'. Indeed, it is already happening as people communicate in the informal language of e-mail. People buy services not because they have read the glossy brochure, but because they have a relationship with someone in the company who listens to suggestions about how to make the product better. More than that, 'to speak with a human voice, companies must share the concerns of their communities. But first, they must belong to a community. Companies must ask themselves where their corporate cultures end. If their cultures end before the community begins, they will have no market.'

This theme of community exercises Steven McGeedy, Vice President of Intel's New Business Group. At a



Part of the Pantanal wetland in Brazil. Campaigners for conservation have used the Internet to mobilize support.

Harvard University conference on the Internet and society, he compared surfing the Internet with 'wandering around a shopping mall that has been neutron-bombed. There are beautiful store windows and all this beautiful merchandise enclosed behind glass... but there are no other people there. It's a very spooky, very lonely feeling to be in this place where you see lots of rich information but have no idea whether

there's a crowd of people around it or whether it's completely vacant.' Certainly there is a risk that the seductions of computers can lead to individuals becoming isolated, and perhaps the vast market for Internet porn is a sign of this.

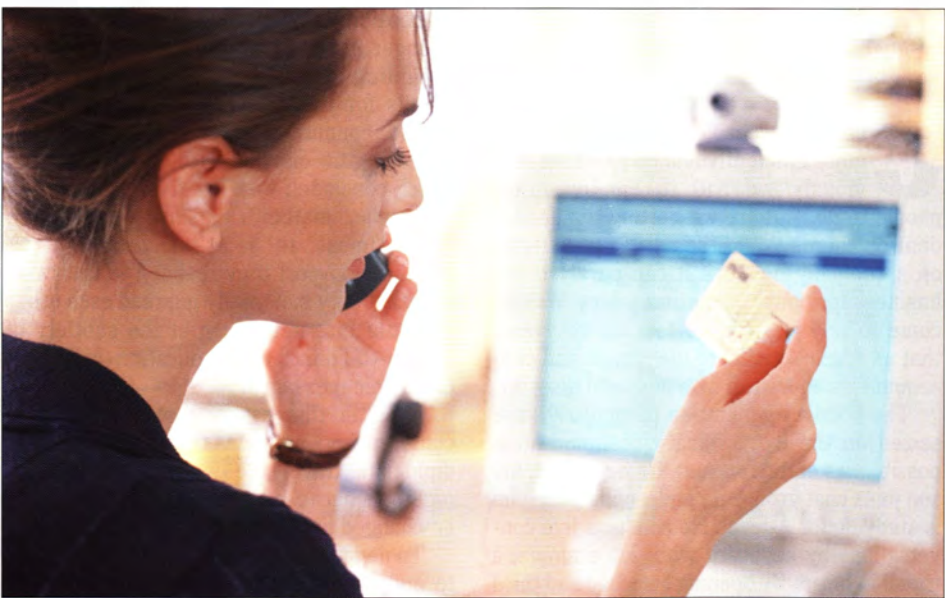
Yet the Internet can also enhance community. Last year, Britain's Channel 4 TV channel conducted a ground-breaking experiment. It gave the residents of a street in

## Combating e-fraud

Problem. You receive an e-mail from your boss asking you to send the results of all your company's top-secret research to a certain address. How do you know that the e-mail is really from him and not a forgery?

The value of a signature is that it is easily recognizable, but not easily produced by anyone else. Similar technology to that used in encryption has created 'digital signatures'—mathematical procedures which produce an easily verifiable result without the procedure itself being copied.

At present, digital signatures are little used, but this could change because of credit-card fraud. According to PriceWaterhouseCoopers, \$16 billion worth of fraudulent transactions were made over the Internet in 1999—roughly half of all credit-card fraud for that year. Alvin Cameron, Credit/Loss Prevention Manager for an



Internet credit-card clearing house, estimates that 20-40 per cent of online purchases are fraud attempts. 'Doing business on the Internet is the equivalent of having

someone walk into your store wearing a ski mask without any ID and offering a bank counter cheque to purchase a \$2,000 stereo system,' he says.

## Secret services

With increasing amounts of sensitive information passing through the Internet, security becomes an important issue. People buying products or services need assurance that their credit-card details will not be intercepted. Companies and governments need to be secure from high-tech espionage.

The use of an early computer to crack the German secret codes during WW2 sounded the death knell for traditional methods of cryptography which depended on substituting different characters or words for others.

In 1975 Whitfield Diffie and Martin Hellman invented an encryption system that

used two related 'keys'—a 'public' one which could be sent to anyone who wanted to send something to you, and a 'private' one which was not distributed, and was used to decode the information sent through your public key.

This was still not totally secure as the public key could be used to crack the private key by going through all the possible combinations (in the same way that a safe is cracked). 'Strong encryption', which is harder to crack, uses large keys, with a correspondingly large numbers of possible combinations. (DES, a commonly used strong system, has 10 to the power 17 possible combinations. In January 1999, a group of computer enthusiasts cracked a DES key in 22 hours.) As computers get more powerful,

it becomes easier to crack previously secure systems.

Because criminals have also embraced the use of encryption to organize themselves over the Internet, governments have been concerned about public access to this technology. For several years the US government banned the sale of strong encryption software. But it could easily be bought and downloaded from websites in other countries.

Britain has taken a different tack: The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (1999) gives the government powers to force anyone using encryption to hand over their keys or face a two-year prison sentence—legislation that caused an outcry among civil liberties campaigners.



Sunderland computers and Internet access for two weeks, equipped them with a website and chat room and observed what happened. Interestingly, although opinion polls have found that 80 per cent of people over the age of 55 think they'll never use the net, it was the older people in the experiment who found it most useful.

Residents used the Internet to buy things, to pursue particular hobbies and even to search for romance. But, encouragingly, it also enabled them to meet others in the street they had previously only exchanged greetings with. As common interests were discovered, meetings in cyberspace led to meetings in the pub. One resident reported, 'There's a better atmosphere in the street and everyone's walking

around with a smile on their face.'

The Internet will certainly change our lives, and probably those of our children even more. Above all it gives greater possibilities to exercise freedom, and with that goes a corresponding increase in responsibility. Sometimes the responsibility will not be of our choosing—the father who finds his 10-year-old son's e-mail bombarded with pornographic junk-mail will have to talk to him about sex, money and exploitation sooner than he would have wished.

Ultimately it will be us who determine whether the Internet is a force for good or evil. Those who are pessimistic about human nature have grounds to be gloomy about the Internet. As for me, I'm one of the optimists.



## Into the future

If the Internet looks strange now, it's nothing compared to what is coming. With computing power ever increasing the main limitation now is 'bandwidth'—the speed at which information can be transmitted along telephone lines into your home. But, with the merging of telephone and television technologies, bandwidth will soon increase dramatically. Conventional television and radio may be replaced by the Internet. Instead of waiting for, say, the 10 o'clock news on the BBC, you will be able to download video news bulletins any time you want, and select just the bits that interest you. There will soon be hundreds of such sites constantly being updated.

Rapid advances in screen technology are making it possible to read books, magazines, and newspaper articles electronically. Some books are already published electronically but this will increase dramatically. As the cost of publishing electronically is very low, it will be easy for anyone to self-publish.

The technology for video mobile-phones



Many news sites including ITN now offer news-on-demand, including video clips, electronic ticker tape and e-mail updates. They also offer additional access to news via WAP phones and interactive digital TV.

is well underway, though whether anyone will want to use it remains to be seen. What is more disturbing is the development in video manipulation technology which will make it possible to create realistic video entirely on computer. The unscrupulous could create a video of President Bush, for example, doing or saying anything they wanted. Or you could use a 'filter' on your video phone to iron out those wrinkles and make you look younger than you really are.

Seeing is no longer believing!

All of which means that people will not choose to get their news on the basis of national loyalty or which TV station has the glossiest presentation but because they know from experience that they can trust a particular news service. Establishing trust will become increasingly important for institutions like the BBC competing in the world market.

The wallet, diary, mobile phone and address book may all be replaced by little hand-held computers linked to the Internet which will carry our digital ID and our electronic money. These may also be linked to global positioning satellites enabling us (and perhaps others) to know where we are at any time. This raises the spectre of 'Big Brother'. Already vast amounts of information about us are stored on various computers: what we earn, what we spend our money on, where we live, what socio-economic group we fall into. Without adequate regulation we could find 'smart advertisers' sending us messages whenever their computer tells them a potential customer is walking by their shop.

# PEOPLE

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Edited by Anastasia Stepanova

### Timeless music

**A** clock ticks, soft footsteps, whispers in procession to worship and at daybreak, the chanting of clear female voices rise in celebration... For them it's a daily sacred prayer, for us it's a rare moment to be at peace with oneself among all the hustle and bustle of a busy life.

For the first time ever the Roman Catholic Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre from the Priory of the Resurrection, near Chelmsford, Essex, have decided to take their singing outside their priory by releasing an album. 'We didn't mind putting our prayer into a recording in order to share it with people,' says Sister Teresa, one of the 20 nuns who take part. 'Knowing that it would be an invitation to people to look at their inner selves, their spiritual world, even if they are not religious at all, was appealing. And it would be a deepening experience for those who believe in God.'

*Eternal light* (subtitled *Music of inner peace*), was released on 12 March, and draws on a 900-year tradition of daily sung prayer in both Latin and English. It takes listeners into the sacred world of worship which contemplates the different rhythms of life: daily challenges and opportunities, the liturgical year with its feasts and the eternal cycle of human existence. 'Living in such a brutalizing world—the speed, the constant stress, the state of deep struggle as we try to cope with hardships in our lives—then listening to the prayer to somebody who is bigger than us, mightier than us, does make a difference,' says Sister Teresa.

The album is addressed to a wide audience, not only to Christians or church music fans. Within a week of being released, the album reached number three in the UK classi-

cal charts (as we go to press it is number two) and was also in the top 100 in the pop charts. Their record label, Deutsche Grammophon—part of Universal whose other artists have included U2, Sonique and Bob Marley—had no doubt of success as no major label has ever brought out a recording of a female religious community before. (The Benedictine monks from Downside Abbey, Somerset, and EMI's Canto Gregoriano are already known to the world.)

It all started some years ago when Mark Wilkinson, the label's manager, suggested the idea to his aunt, Sister Teresa. As a frequent visitor to the Priory, he had enjoyed their singing. After careful consideration the community agreed to do the album. 'We wanted to be clear on our purpose. We didn't want it to be a great commercial "do", but simply to bring something contemplative into people's lives,' says Sister Teresa.



The singing canonesses of the Priory of the Resurrection

Most of the profits will go to the order's convents in Rwanda and Congo while the rest will go to making their gardens more accessible to wheelchairs.

The canonesses are members of an international Catholic order, the Order of The Holy Sepulchre, whose origins lie in 11th century Jerusalem. Today the community runs an independent girls' school and pastoral centre. The order is spread throughout the world, with priories in Europe, Africa and South America.

Through sharing their prayer and spiritual possessions with secular people, the Canonesses seek to build relationships based on love and mutuality. That is why they don't see this album as a performance in a commercial sense.

'You are still praying when you sing,' emphasizes Sister Teresa.

In spite of this attitude, the nuns have had to help with the

album's promotion. Sister Teresa and Sister Moira attended the annual Brit Awards—the Oscars of British popular music—this February. 'It was a totally new experience not only for us, but for the usual audience there,' says Sister Teresa. 'I hope we are challenging the stereotypes!'

The canonesses are not planning to plunge themselves into the music industry, but if the record company offers them the chance of releasing a second album they will think it over again. And what if the label were to suggest changes to make the music more accessible to younger people? 'We would certainly consider their suggestions,' confirms Sister Teresa.

'Making a CD has drawn us closer together and to lots of other people,' she says. 'I find it revitalizing to link people together no matter what confession or age group they belong to. This helps people to walk into the future with hope for each other.'

Anastasia Stepanova

### A job for gypsy women

**A** small but resolute group in Treviso, 30 miles north of Venice, has set up a cooperative which helps gypsies—the most marginalized ethnic group in Italy.

The gypsy population in Italy is quite small. They used to be welcomed in towns and villages because of the entertainment and skill in metal work they brought with them. They were also competent horse traders. Now practically all their trades and crafts have died out and if they vacate a camping site, they find it almost impossible to find a new one. So they have become the poorest of the poor and often make a living by begging and petty thieving.

The gypsies, especially women, have come to realize that the only way out of their present situation is to integrate. This imperils their great cultural traditions, which have been enriching Europe through the centuries.

Integration is easier said than done. Prospective employers have to face the initial cost of training itinerant people in the basic ethics of settled work. However, the hardest thing to overcome is prejudice, the conviction that they will never be any good.

The project in Treviso provides jobs for gypsies who work alongside three pensioners who have volunteered to help with supervision and book-keeping. The work is contracted out by industrial firms in the area. I met Giancarlo Vettori, president of the cooperative at the gypsies' workshop. He devotes most of his free time to the cooperative and works in shifts at an animal feed firm.

The project started when two teachers, one of them Vettori's wife, became involved in encouraging gypsy children to attend school. As a result they made friends with the mothers of children from the two gypsy camps in Treviso, which belong to the mutually antagonistic ethnic groups of Sinti and Rom. Now the women from both groups work happily side by side.

In 1996 they started working in the spare rooms of a parish house hoping that, with the help of local industrialists or of the city itself, they would move to one of the many unused industrial sheds around. But everybody, including the mayor, turned their backs. So they decided to take the risk of renting one of these sheds without any financial aid. Luckily, in 1998 Caritas set up a fund to support gypsies and a grant from them helped to make the shed more habitable.

In their first year they had a loss of 40 million lire (£13,000), which a local bank underwrote. Then more work came in and they were able to break even, but at a sacrifice to the women, who have to be laid off for some two months a year without being paid. They accept because they feel responsible for the cooperative. If there were enough orders they would be happy to work more hours, and many relatives would join in. But most firms prefer to break the law for a marginal difference in costs, by turning to housewives and pensioners who work at home and do not pay taxes or social insurance contributions.

The gypsy women have proved to be motivated, responsible and efficient workers, which makes one wonder who needs rehabilitation, the gypsies or the leaders of this prosperous area?

Adriano Costa

### Bournemouth visit

**R**ichmond Hill United Reformed Church in Bournemouth, in the south of England, was packed at the end of April when a group of local people performed *The Visit*. The play, by Adrian Plass, describes the shockwaves in the church of St Thomas the Doubter when Christ comes to visit.

The staging of this production for Bournemouth was the idea of Frank Beale, a former mayor, and his wife Leone. When Frank died in January this year, Leone decided to carry on with the project. 'We've done it in Frank's memory, remembering his life and his vision of the part each of us has as a citizen,' she says.

Frank Beale was a director of Beales Department Stores, founded by his grandfather, and also followed family tradition in



Leone Beale with Frank who died in January. Together they planned a performance of Adrian Plass's play *The Visit* in Bournemouth.

his civic work. Both his father and his grandfather were mayors before him. He was known in the town as 'Mr Bournemouth'.

Leone also followed family tradition in her profession. Brought up in a family of Bournemouth hotel owners, she became Managing Director of the restaurant of the Westminster Theatre, London. In the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties, the theatre was a centre for Christian theatre in London's West End.

They met for the first time when she was 19, lost touch and only got married 47 years later. As a religious person, she considers it to be a miracle as she had come to terms with leading her life by herself. 'One has to trust and put oneself into the loving hands of God.'

They spent seven and a half years of 'truly happy marriage' together. During that period Leone organized a number of events through their church.

'We tried to give what we could to the town and it happened with *The Visit*.'

Five hundred people turned up on the night. The cast included a vicar and his wife, a councillor and his wife and a funeral director. 'We had Catholics, we had Protestants, we just had a cross section of people,' says Leone Beale. 'It was a mountain top experience.'

The play found a great response in people's hearts. 'People were laughing, people were in tears,' she says. Afterwards the Vicar of St Peter's Church, Bournemouth, said, 'That play was a blessing and showed us what our real priorities are.'

'Frank was always an enabler,' says Leone. 'He enabled people to do things. He would give money, his time, his friendship, so that other people would benefit. My vision that his death could bring new life has come true through *The Visit*.'

Anastasia Stepanova



Mathew Chaplin

Peter and Linda Biehl with Nwabisa Bonxo, manager of the Youth Reading Role-Models project

How would you respond to your daughter's murder?

Peter and Linda Biehl

have found new meaning in life by helping to heal the wounds of the community where she was killed.

They talk to

Helena Kingwill.

## Weaving a barrier against violence

Nothing could have prepared Peter and Linda Biehl for what they were about to hear when the telephone rang in their home in California in August 1993. It was every parent's nightmare news: their daughter Amy had been beaten and stabbed to death in South Africa.

Amy Biehl was a Fullbright Scholar, based at the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town and specializing in the empowerment of women in underprivileged communities. She was involved with the Womens' National Coalition, gathering visions of what a new South Africa should offer to women. One evening as she drove some of her colleagues home to Guguletu township, she fell prey to an angry group of black youths.

The tragedy might have devastated Amy's parents if they had allowed depres-

sion and anger to overcome them. Instead, they used their energy creatively to continue their daughter's work. As a result, Amy Biehl's legacy lives on and her spirit is strong, especially in the minds of the people of Guguletu, where she was killed.

'When I got the official word that Amy had been killed, I instinctively knew that I would eventually be acting out her activism,' Linda Biehl tells me. The couple form a close team, with Linda's enthusiasm and motherly networking skills complementing Peter's steady, practical and creative business sense and big-heartedness.

I meet them at 9 am in their office at the Amy Biehl Foundation Trust in Cape Town. This is not the first appointment of their day. They work on a tight, non-stop schedule coordinating and raising funds for a wide range of projects, whilst travelling regularly between the US and South Africa.

The Foundation's motto is 'weaving a

barrier against violence'; its method: educating, imparting skills and creating recreational, social and physical outlets for youth. This is a mammoth task which many weary South Africans would rather not face, yet the Biehls' commitment has seen their project grow beyond their wildest dreams.

In July 1997, Peter Biehl addressed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission amnesty hearings for Amy's killers. 'The most important vehicle of reconciliation is open and honest dialogue,' he said. 'We are here to reconcile a human life which was taken without an opportunity for dialogue. When we are finished with this process we must move forward with linked arms.' The killers, who had been sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment, were granted amnesty and walked free. The Biehls not only shook hands with them but visited their homes and embraced their mothers who were suffering too.

Instead of angrily avoiding their daughter's murderers, the Biehls took them on unconditionally, entering their lives in an effort to understand, yet respecting their space. Peter explains, 'We want to see them succeed and we know that Amy would want to see them succeed.' As a result, two of them have started a youth group, on their own suggestion, in conjunction with the Amy Biehl Foundation Trust and are helping to 'weave a barrier against violence'.

Reaching out to their daughter's killers, and becoming involved in South Africa, was a 'risk', says Linda Biehl. 'When you act out publicly what you think, you are vulnerable and people take potshots at you.' But, she told the US television programme, *Seeds of peace*, 'If you believe, you act accordingly.'

Peter clarifies: 'For most people to act what they think requires that first they have to un-bundle themselves from all sorts of encumbrances, most of which are self-imposed, others of which are not. The longer you spend in life the more encumbered you get. What Linda and I have discovered is that when somebody who is important to you is suddenly stripped away from you, then the conventional encumbrances tend not to matter. The moment that we accepted the reality of Amy's death, and reflected on the reason for it and why she was here, it really stripped away everything that could possibly have encumbered us.'

Their involvement in South Africa started after Amy's death, when people sent money as well as flowers. The Biehls searched for non-profit organizations who could take the money, and, after sending some to the group for whom Amy had worked, decided to start a foundation in her name.

In September 1997, they met the Minister of Health of the day, Dr Nkosazana Zuma, who was crusading against AIDS. She nudged them into action by commanding

them, 'Educate my youth in Guguletu about HIV/AIDS!' This helped them to settle on Guguletu as a starting point, and although weaving a barrier against violence is their main focus, HIV/AIDS is one of the related issues they address.

They started out by finding a community liaison in each of Guguletu's four sectors who then picked out 15 children between the ages of eight and 15 to take part in workshops on violence. The facilitator was a young Xhosa woman who had grown up in Guguletu and then studied psychology in the States focussing on the dynamics of violence. She counselled the children for a couple of months. 'She was able to assess what their needs were,' Linda says. 'It was kind of simple. They wanted more recreation, places to go after school, music programmes, a chance to learn to read better. If they had stuff to do, and if they had skills development, then they could dare to dream their dreams.'

Within three years the Biehls, with the help of American student interns and the people of the communities, had set up a network of programmes and businesses which are partially funded at present but are designed to become self-sustaining. A bakery producing 'Amy's Bread', a construction business which offers job opportunities and training, and a golf driving range, all based in the townships, help fund after-school skills programmes. These include the Youth Reading Role-Models project, which recruits teenagers to read aloud to pre-primary children; first aid training; a modelling school; and youth groups, some of which facilitate AIDS education and train youth as peer counsellors. Youth group activities also include mountain climbing expeditions and picnics.

The project has branched out as far as George in the Western Cape, where a flourishing bakery funds book-reading and youth groups in the local township schools. All the programmes, both in George and in Cape Town, were created at the suggestion of local people.

The foundation is an 'almost zero budget operation', says Peter. Its American office is in their home and the Biehls pay the phone bills. The whole family is involved in the project to some extent. Molly and Kim, Amy's older sisters, work part-time to raise funds, and her younger brother, who keeps a lower profile, assists his parents where he can. As Peter and Linda tour the US, giving talks in churches, schools and institutes, they see themselves as 'contributing to America's understanding of South Africa'.

When the Biehls attended the White House dinner for South Africa's President, Thabo Mbeki, they were surprised to be approached by US Members of Congress who asked them to explain the idiosyncrasies of South African politics. They have also been asked to address the World Bank in Washington about what is and isn't working in Africa. Both seem astonished at

where their path has led them, and believe the respect comes from the fact that they work at the grassroots.

So who were Linda and Peter Biehl before that August day when their lives changed? Peter describes himself laughingly as 'first and foremost an actor and a musician', but he worked as an international business consultant.

From 1979 to 1985, the family lived in an artists' colony in Sante Fe, New Mexico, where they ran a small art gallery, working with Native American artists. 'Sante Fe was a tri-cultural area, with the Native Americans, the Hispanics and the Anglo culture,' says Linda. 'At school Amy had the opportunity to interact with a lot of cultures.'

She sees similarities between indigenous art in New Mexico and South Africa—beadwork, pottery and clay. 'I don't think the arts here in South Africa have been developed to the extent that they could be. The education system is so structured. The teachers march round with their sticks to keep control. Township kids are taught to draw on small scraps of paper. They don't have a chance to paint on a broad canvas.'

One of their early projects involved teenagers in painting murals to brighten oppressive township walls. 'Murals are big,' says Linda. 'Kids like those! It's good to get them thinking big.' In a new project, children are painting on long strips of paper, which will be rolled up and taken to New York for exhibition.

Thinking big is the Biehls' style and their next project is along those lines: an art and culture centre in Phillipi, a sprawling industrial and agricultural area on the outskirts of Cape Town. When we meet, Linda is paging through the building plans: she envisages the Buthisizwe community centre as a cultural bee-hive, meeting place and market place.

What advice would Linda give to other parents who have suffered the loss of a child? 'I don't like giving advice,' she replies. 'Each has their own way of dealing with the pain.'

For Peter and her, she says, the work has filled a void. 'If I could have stopped what happened to Amy, I would have fought with the devil himself. Sometimes, doing this work, we feel Amy is proud and is here with us. Sometimes we feel she would criticize our decisions, and at others she would have done the same thing. You have to assimilate the reality and find constructive things to do.'

'Our work is a celebration of our daughter's life,' adds Peter. 'Molly says she lived fast. She died at 26. I am really excited that she accomplished so much in her life. She has inspired people to do something for a cause bigger than themselves.'

For more information visit [www.amybiehl.org](http://www.amybiehl.org)



# Jumpstarting young leaders

Caroline Chatterton arrived at Sheffield Hallam University, UK, in September 1998 having messed up her A-levels and feeling a failure. 'I was very disillusioned and disappointed with myself,' she says.

Today she is almost frighteningly motivated, with her sights set on a career in corporate law when she finishes her present business studies course. What turned things around for her, she says, was taking part in Learn to Lead (L2L), a training programme run by an unlikely partnership of students and business and community leaders. 'It totally changed me,' she says. 'It helped me to learn from mistakes, clarify my feelings and thoughts, set goals and realize that it doesn't matter what happened in the past,

everything comes from today.' It also opened her eyes to needs in the community and made her want to make a difference.

Chatterton's account of how she got a grip on her life is peppered with quotations from Richard Field, one of the L2L trainers. Field, a former Master Cutler of Sheffield and President of the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, devotes most of his time to training top management in leadership skills. He finds it 'extraordinary' that these processes which enhance people's self-esteem, self-confidence and effectiveness are not taught at schools and colleges.

Like Chatterton, L2L's Chief Executive, Krish Raval, left school with a sense of failure. The son of Indian immigrants who came to Britain from Ethiopia in 1975, Raval spent his school years in remedial classes, and only began to realize his potential when he went to sixth-form college. He graduated from Sheffield University with a law degree in 1995, 'kind of upset that I'd learnt none of the things I needed to know for life: management processes, how to deal with people'.

Before going on to Cambridge University, Raval attended an MRA conference in Caux, Switzerland, where he heard Field describe how under his chairmanship a company which had been losing over £300,000 a month had been turned into one of the most successful companies of its kind in the world. The key, he said, had been creating trust. But highly qualified young people were coming to him for jobs with no

What difference would it make if people learnt to be leaders at the beginning rather than the end of their careers?

Mary Lean finds out.

training in such fundamental life-skills.

Raval put it to Field that they should get together to plug this gap, and over the next two weeks they outlined a programme, through which community and business leaders in Sheffield would pass on their skills to students, who would then apply them in the local community. The aim would be 'community transformation through the development of leadership in young people'.

The course, launched as Students for Sheffield (S4S) in 1996, has evolved over the years, but retains its emphasis on exchange between 'today's leaders' and 'tomorrow's leaders', and on service to the community. The present programme has four phases. In the autumn term, students from the city's two universities take part in a residential weekend followed by six Sunday sessions. 'We aim to expand their practical awareness of self-leadership and interdependence, and expose them to good role models who are making a difference to the world,' says Raval. Although the side-effects include increased self-esteem and confidence, the programme is 'not just about motivating people, it's about helping them

to reassess their motives in life'. Each student is offered a placement shadowing a local leader.

In the spring, the focus moves on to sixth form (16 and older) students, who go through a similar programme, facilitated by the university students. In the summer, the post-16 and university students design and run activities and mentoring schemes for disengaged, but bright, 15- and 16-year-olds. The fourth phase, which has just been piloted, will give graduates of each age group the opportunity to mentor their peers, in return for some payment: an alternative, says Raval, to more traditional student jobs in Tesco's or local restaurants.

The programme has drawn in such local figures as Douglas Brand, the Assistant Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police, Michael Sadgrove, the Dean of Sheffield Cathedral, and Isadora Aiken, the General Manager of SADACCA, the largest African-Caribbean community centre in Europe. To the faculty's surprise, it has turned out to be a two-way process: 'We learn just as much from the students as they do from us,' says Field. Aiken sees it as a 'rare opportunity' for exchange between the community and students.

Learn to Lead's chair, John Lambert, spent 30 years in the Department of Education and Employment before leaving to become a consultant last year. 'The programme gives young people patterns of thinking and behaviour that most of us don't get into until a lot later,' he says. 'I just love meeting them a year later and seeing how much they've come on. It's much more dramatic and faster than the normal processes of growing up.'

The 'post-16s' who take part in the spring programme are recruited from Sheffield College, a huge five-site institution with 40,000 students—about 6,000 of whom are full-time. 'Many would say that the confidence they got through the programme changed their lives,' says Henry Hui, senior manager for youth training and development on one of the sites. Students who have been through the course become 'ambassadors for the college and the programme' to their old schools and help to induct the following year's intake.

Clinton Hefford, a graduate of the 1999-2000 programme who is now working as an engineer at TLW Aerospace in Birmingham, says that he uses what he learnt all the time. 'It sparked my enthusiasm and faith that I can make suggestions and follow them through.'

Andrea Cooper, now a customer business development manager with Procter and Gamble in Harrogate, took part in the first S4S programme in 1996, during her second year at Sheffield University. After a highly motivated, and well-supported, school career, the more relaxed environment of university had left her feeling de-motivated. 'S4S was like a jolt of electricity which woke

me up again.'

She drew up a 12-month plan of what she wanted to achieve—a 2.1 degree, a grip on her personal finances, a summer placement with a company, targets for a small business she was running, improvements in her relationships with family and friends—and 'made it all happen'.

Last year, when her company was setting up a 'community relations team', Cooper went along. 'They were talking about helping the community by giving them spare computers and spare products—it was done with a good heart, but it wasn't going to make a real difference.' Inspired by her experiences with S4S, she suggested setting up a programme through which local businesses would train 16- to 18-year-olds who would then use their new skills to help local charities.

The result is Harrogate Community Works!, a local coalition of businesses, schools and charities. It piloted its 'learn to lead' training programme last November and December. Each of the 10 school students

who took part has been given a mentor from the business community and £500 to use in a project with a local charity. 'For instance, two students are going to produce a resources manual for Breakaway 2000, a group which organizes day trips and holidays for the old or disabled.' The plan is to hold two courses a year, each for 25 students, and the next will start in June.

There's something in all this for business, as well as for the community, she says. The courses and mentoring give young managers a chance to practise their skills, and the process makes them feel more at home in the community. 'If they're happy where they are, they're more productive.'

Since 1996, 500 young people have been through the training programmes in Sheffield, and a further 2,000 were involved in one-day 'mega-events' in 1997 and 1998. The aim is now to spread the model to other cities. Liverpool is the first up, with plans to run phase 1 in February 2002. As Isadora Aiken says, 'It's a brilliant idea. The model needs to be adopted in every town and city.'

## Seizing the opportunity

Sabrina Ali, who is studying for her A-levels at Sheffield College, took part in last spring's course for post-16s.

She writes:

Have you ever wondered if education, experience and qualifications alone were enough to get you ready for the big wide world? Well I came across some clearly dedicated students who didn't think so.

They were afraid that although they might have the right experience and qualifications, they might not have the right skills to adapt to the new environment. What these students actually need is belief in themselves, so they can realize their 'infinite potential'.

The Learn to Lead course we participated in was organized by Mike Murphy, who had been working for L2L fulltime for six months, after eight years studying engineering. Its purpose was to enable students to gain their highest potential.

It was the last day of the course and I was sat amongst my newfound friends. Everyone seemed to be reviewing what exactly they had gained during the residential weekend and the three successive Sundays.

This is what Rachel, a Sheffield College



Sabrina Ali (centre) with the class of 2001

student, had to say: 'I used to care a lot about what people thought of me, but being on this course has made me realize it doesn't actually matter as long as you're happy with yourself.'

Jodie, a university student, had been most interested by the sessions led by Dave Curtis, Director of John Carlisle Partnerships. 'It made you think about people's temperaments and the way they act towards each other. It's something which colleges and universities don't teach us, it helps you realize your potential and justify your own existence.'

Krish Raval, who started the programme five years ago, says, 'It's an opportunity for young people across the city to be the best that they can, where top leaders come in and help them fulfil their aims.'

Personally, I agree with Rachel. This course has given me confidence to do and be what I believe, not what others perceive me to be. That's why I've decided to return in the summer and help the 15-year-olds gain their highest potential.



Andrea Cooper: 'S4S woke me up again.'



Krish Raval: 'expand practical awareness'



## Breaking up the boulder of unemployment

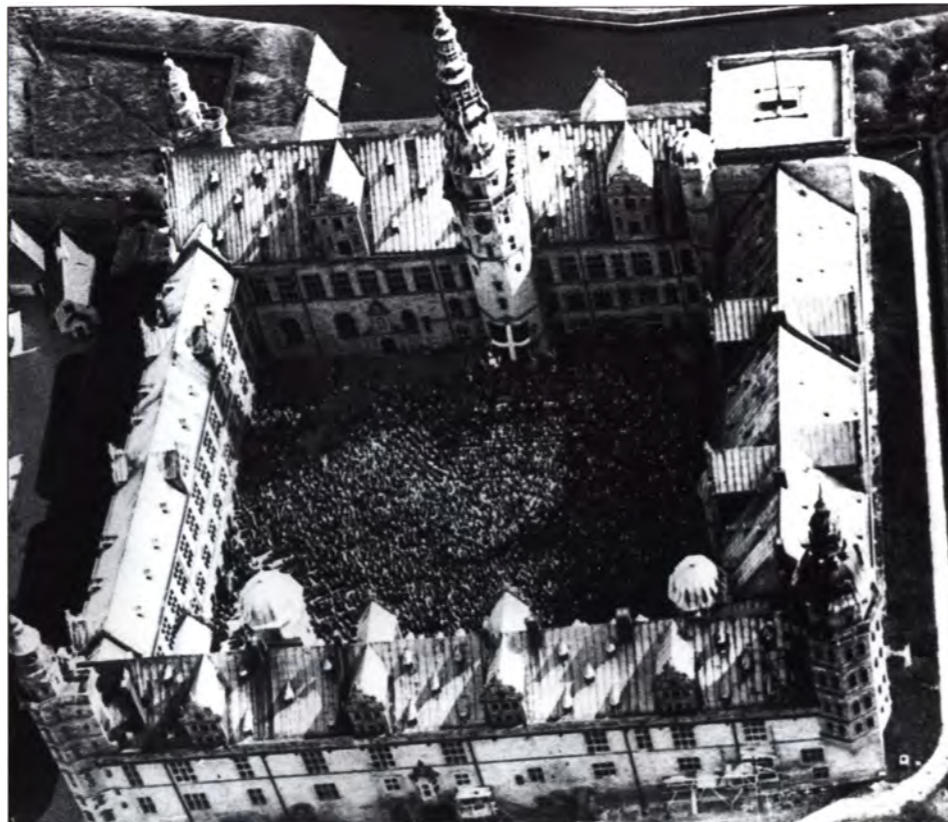
In the 1930s, The Oxford Group, which later became MRA, sparked off a spiritual revival in Scandinavia. In Denmark, as Keld Jørgensen describes in these extracts from his recent booklet\*, it led to a people's movement to tackle unemployment.

Unemployment dominated everything in Denmark throughout the 1930s. It created an immense amount of human misery, sapped the Danish economy and set back social improvements. Reforms passed by the Social Democratic government in 1934 granted the unemployed some financial assistance. But the sum was far too small to support a family, so unemployment remained a real disaster for all those affected by it.

In 1935 Valdemar Hvidt was a High Court advocate, married with two small children. In spite of his apparent success, he felt that his life was falling apart, and he was giving up hope of ever becoming really happy. He and his wife were devoted to each other, but their relationship seemed one big struggle, with their attempts to communicate constantly missing the mark.

That year the Oxford Group (later MRA) held a series of meetings in Copenhagen, on the theme of personal renewal. Over 35,000 people attended in eight days and the radio and press carried enthusiastic reports. Hvidt decided to go and see what was happening. The core of the message was a challenge to put right what was wrong and to listen to God with a willingness to follow his will. Change in people, the speakers asserted, could lead to change in their environment.

Hvidt was still sceptical at the close of the meeting, but he made a deal with himself. He recognized a couple in the crowd who had recently asked him to arrange their divorce. If the Oxford Group's message had an impact on them, he thought, he would reconsider it. The next day they turned up



Oxford Group rally in June 1935 attended by 10,000 people at Kronberg castle

at his office to call off the divorce.

So, along with many other Danes, Hvidt decided to experiment with the Oxford Group's approach and take time every morning to be quiet and listen in his heart for inspiration. If it worked, it could be revolutionary, and if it did not—well, at least he would have given it a try.

As time went by, Hvidt noticed changes happening in and around people who had adopted this practice of listening. They started not only to take responsibility for their own lives, but to respond to the problems around them, including unemployment.

One example was Alfred Nielsen, the proprietor of the largest sawmill combine in Jutland. In 1936 he had refused to grant his employees a wage rise on the grounds that the firm could not afford it. A year later, after coming into contact with the Oxford Group, Nielsen admitted to his workers that the real reason for his refusal had been that his private pocket would have suffered. He went over the firm's finances in detail with his employees, and together they agreed upon adequate provision for everyone. Because of their new working relationship, Nielsen and his employees decided that they should do something for those less fortunate than themselves. The firm took on more workers. In spite of the increased wages and manpower, the firm's finances held up—because the workforce were more satisfied and more productive.

Hvidt featured this and other examples in an article he wrote in 1938 for the daily newspaper *Politiken* about the effects of personal responsibility. The article was

published shortly before a visit by Frank Buchman, the Oxford Group's initiator, to Copenhagen, where he spoke to several hundred people in the Phoenix Hotel and asked them what they were doing about Denmark's 200,000 unemployed—a third of the industrial workforce in what was still a largely agrarian country.

Valdemar Hvidt left the meeting in the Phoenix Hotel convinced that there was no shortage of jobs that needed doing in industry and agriculture, but uncertain how to translate these needs into employment. As he sought inspiration in a quiet time he suddenly realized that if you have a boulder that is too big to carry, you can break it down into pieces. Unemployment might be too big a problem to be solved by the government alone. But it could be dealt with at the local level, bit by bit.

He got together a working party made up of people who had taken to heart Buchman's challenge at the Phoenix Hotel. They included Alfred Nielsen and HAV Hansen, a former farmer who was now a colonel in the Danish army. They decided to implement Hvidt's idea by encouraging everyone they could think of to ask themselves whether they were doing all they could to improve the situation.

Hansen went to see a farmer he knew and asked him what he would do with the unemployed in his area if he were responsible. The farmer retorted that the unemployed were the government's responsibility, not his. 'How many unemployed do you have here?' Hansen asked. The farmer replied that there were 14 unemployed

people in the parish. Then he added, 'Of course, I could have my barn painted.' He gathered his neighbours and told them of his intentions. By the end of the evening, they had found work between them for all 14 people.

In Vejle on the Jutland peninsula, where there were 25 unemployed painters, Henry K Andersen, an employee of Danish Railways, went to ask the leaders of the painters' union why they accepted this situation. The result was a home-refurbishment drive. The 25 painters soon found work, and joiners and carpenters had to be brought in from other towns.

Similar private initiatives began to ripple out all over the country and led, in 1939, to the creation of the National Association for Combating Unemployment (LAB) to mobilize voluntary initiatives to deal with unemployment. It also provided research, training and advice.

Most of the LAB's work was based in local communities. In Silkeborg, for instance, the chair of the housewives' association, Grethe Madsen, realized that much of the rubbish that was thrown away could be re-used: the rags and iron in factories and the food waste as pigfeed on farms. The thought caught the imagination of other communities, and waste-collectors with their bicycles became a regular feature of town life.

Alfred Nielsen also recognized the potential of waste. On a trip to the forest to buy wood for his sawmills, he noticed the tree stumps and waste wood lying around and realized that clearing them could provide work for many people. He persuaded Danish Railways to buy the wood as fuel for their steam engines. Hundreds of people were employed in this way.

Denmark was occupied by Germany on 9 April 1940. A few weeks later, the LAB organized a national waste collection scheme which employed several hundred people. Some 30,000 pigs were fed with the kitchen waste that they collected.

Under Hvidt's enthusiastic leadership, the LAB became well-known. Some 50 local committees were set up around the country to create jobs.

In the autumn of 1943 the LAB turned their minds to the risk of substantial unemployment after the war, which might impede Denmark's recovery. They launched a major campaign to encourage farmers to take on extra workers to do repairs, build silos, drain fields and maintain roads. They visited 100,000 farms and some 30,000 jobs were created. LAB continued its work into the 1960s, by which time unemployment had ceased to be a problem. ■

\**Initiatives for change: Denmark 1938-55* by Keld Jørgensen. Caux Books 2000. Available from Caux Books, Mountain House, Caux, Switzerland. Price: SF14.50

## Romania's source of strength

In the weeks before Easter three Danish couples visited Transylvania, Romania, to speak at four universities on the values necessary to make democracy function. They were there at the invitation of members of the Romanian judiciary who had attended the MRA conferences in Caux, Switzerland, and who believe that their country's problems will only be addressed through a reformation of people's characters.

Even though Romania experienced a bloody revolution in December 1989, the system did not change radically. The Communist Party became Social Democratic. But the legacy of corruption from the communist time continued. Factories were sold to foreign investors, only to be dismantled. Links with the mafia continue to hamper the free development of the economy.

The lecture tour was carried out with

support from the Danish Foreign Office Fund for Democracy Courses. The Danes spoke on criminal law, women's rights, education for democracy, bridge-building across national boundaries, the free press, and the development of the folk high school, cooperative and labour movements and the radical social laws of the 1930s.

The lectures provoked animated discussions. Seven hundred and fifty students and lecturers were given copies of the Romanian edition of *Initiatives for Change—Denmark 1938-55* (see opposite page), by one of the Danes, Keld Jørgensen.

After a lecture to a full auditorium at the 1 December 1918 University in Alba Iulia, Augustin Lazar, a former chief state prosecutor and now a professor at the university, thanked the Danish visitors for 'taking us back to our deepest Christian roots. You have demonstrated how a small people can build a great future. Since visiting Caux and Denmark, I have explained to my students that spiritual values are like another Marshall Plan which has brought economic fruits to Danish society.'

Knud Simon Christensen



## Dialogue in Wales

Jon Richmond (right) of the North Wales Tourist Board talks with the Rev John Gillibrand, Vicar of Menai Bridge, Anglesey, at the recent 'Welsh Dialogue' held in Bangor, north Wales.

On the theme 'making space for each other', this was the sixth in a series of dialogues seeking a uniting vision for Wales. Saunders Davies, the Bishop of Bangor, chaired it. Representatives of ethnic minority communities in south Wales shared their

challenges and concerns with a wide range of delegates from north Wales. Discussions focused on the relationships between communities and between north and south Wales. Many in north Wales have felt increasingly marginalized under the post-devolution settlement.

Suggestions on how to build bridges between north and south were later discussed at a working lunch for dialogue participants at the National Assembly for Wales in Cardiff, hosted by Jenny Randerson, Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language, and two Assembly Members from other parties.

Paul Williams



## Dealing with depression

**John Lester**, a medical doctor, dispels some of the myths surrounding depression—and looks at some of the issues that would-be carers need to consider.

I wanted to help a man who had major mood swings. For some months he would be depressed and unable to work. Then he would become 'high', having prodigious energy but in reality not being able to perform sensibly. The difficulty was that when he was low he couldn't bear to unburden himself to a doctor. And when he was high he had 'never felt better' and saw no need of one.

I have had to deal with a number of people with similar problems. There is a window of opportunity, as the individual swings from one extreme to another, when it may be easier to get through to them and explain their needs clearly. There are now good mood stabilizing drugs which can help such people—if they can be persuaded to take them regularly.

Every year the average general practitioner sees between 60 and 100 patients who are clinically depressed. Most do not experi-

ence swings of mood. They simply feel 'down' for weeks, months or even years. Many others are walking round with depression which has not been recognized.

Clinical depression must be distinguished from the perfectly normal, but temporary, feeling of depression which arises from something like a bereavement or a job loss. Depression, the illness, is quite different and may well arise out of a clear blue sky. One hazard is that people who have experienced 'normal' depression often think that this gives them valid experience in dealing with clinical depression.

Depression is hard to cope with if you suffer from it, difficult to understand if you don't, and frustrating for those close to a sufferer.

The attitudes of society to clinical depression, and indeed all mental illness, are often so lacking in understanding and com-

passion that they worsen the condition of the sufferers.

**T**he way in which we handle mental illness is a good test of the maturity of our society. All illness used to be regarded as something visited on people. It could be the result of sin—either their own or others'. This 'model', which emerged in a more religious, but not more enlightened, age presumed a degree of fault somewhere. People who were healthy could easily regard themselves as 'spiritually' fitter than those who were sick. Today we would distance ourselves completely from this view. When it comes to physical illness the more likely response is 'there but for the grace of God...'

But what about mental illness? Does a vestige of this view linger? It is not so easy (yet) to explain such illnesses, and we can still ascribe fault to the sufferer. Who has

not thought or said to someone with depression—'pull yourself together', 'don't be so selfish' or 'think of others'? No one would dream of saying such things to a friend suffering from a heart attack.

There are many risk factors for a heart attack, and it may be helpful to think of depression in a similar way. It, too, is an illness which may have been building up for some time. There may well be a genetic predisposition, or something may have happened in early life which remains hidden and unhealed—such as abuse. There may be new stresses, such as the loss of a loved one, or an intolerable job, which act as a trigger. Hormonal changes make a difference—hence post-natal depression, menopausal depression and the minor mood swings that many women experience at certain times of the month. There appear to be chemical changes in the brain, which can be partially reversed by antidepressant medication even though it is still not understood why the changes happen. It is likely that future research will provide ever more specific medication.

Because there are many causes there are many treatments, including anti-depressant medication, mood-stabilization medication, counselling for those who have had traumatic experiences, and formal psychotherapy for those with more profound damage. Hospitalization may be necessary as depression can, like a heart attack, be fatal. The possibility of suicide needs to be an ever-present concern.

Depression can affect those who care for the sufferers very deeply. Within a marriage, for example, the sufferer may be someone who has always enjoyed going out and having fun. A change to feeling unable and afraid to go out is very distressing for the patient. But it is also difficult for the partner who cannot continue doing the things that he or she loved. If they reveal their pain this makes the sufferer feel worse. If the relationship depended on what they did together it may be in danger—and that, too, deepens the depression.

The reaction of the partner, therefore, is crucial to the well-being of the sufferer. The partner thinking that the one they love is in some way to blame for not snapping out of it both makes the illness worse and threatens the relationship. It is surprising how often those involved in such situations fail to realize what is happening.

Amongst the people I have treated there have been a few who were desperately ill; rather more who were seriously affected and a large number who were inconvenienced but managed to navigate. The main difficulty has been in encouraging those who are ill to take treatment. So many are afraid of medication—perhaps because they fear side-effects or don't want to show 'weakness'. Some become so anxious that they are afraid of getting better and having to do the things that frighten them. They require a great deal

of care. And that is often given by friends and relatives who are understanding, totally non-judgmental and who do not regard themselves as amateur psychologists and psychiatrists. Many who shy away from giving advice on most medical matters have a misplaced confidence when it comes to psychiatric advice.

**W**hat do I consider the best therapeutic agent? Many recognize the need for holistic medicine, for inner healing and wholeness as well as 'cures'. This is needed by each of us, not just those we designate as ill. Because we live in a secular age, some have lost touch with a deeper understanding which comes from faith. This does not just mean prayer for instant healing. Such a miracle may be given but sometimes the answer which we receive from our silent beseeching to the God we may just hope is there is a deep trust in his mercy. We come to know that he can heal us and will be with us through the difficulties. That sense of God's love, if it is given, is the most important of all therapy, though it helps to recognize that a feeling of an inability to reach God can itself be a feature of the illness.

Those who discover such truths for themselves seem able not only to withstand the distress of illness but also to grow through it and become more understanding, more compassionate and more sensitive. They become less of a burden on those who care for them. Unwelcome as the illness is, it can be used for good.

Mental illness still frightens us because it is strange and unknown. But perhaps we should be grateful for the things which we don't know and cannot control because they can help to lead us to different and profounder truths.

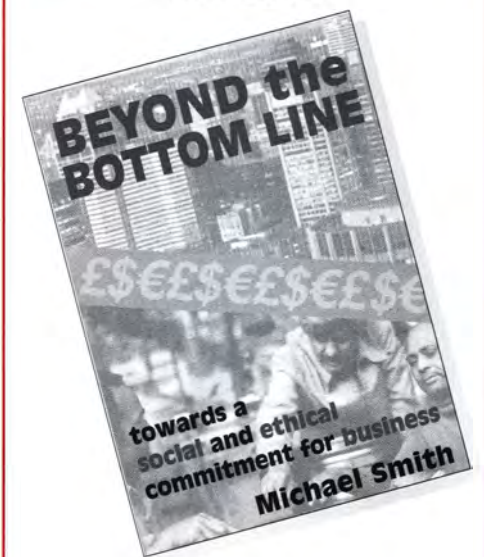
Having lived in big cities for years I became used to a rather empty night sky. When we moved to the country I was staggered by the brightness of the stars. Sometimes the light of conventional wisdom, which we use all the time to uncover answers to our problems, simply obscures the world beyond.

Looking at depression, rather than being depressing, can perhaps lift our eyes upwards to the great unknown! ■

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by **Michael Smith**

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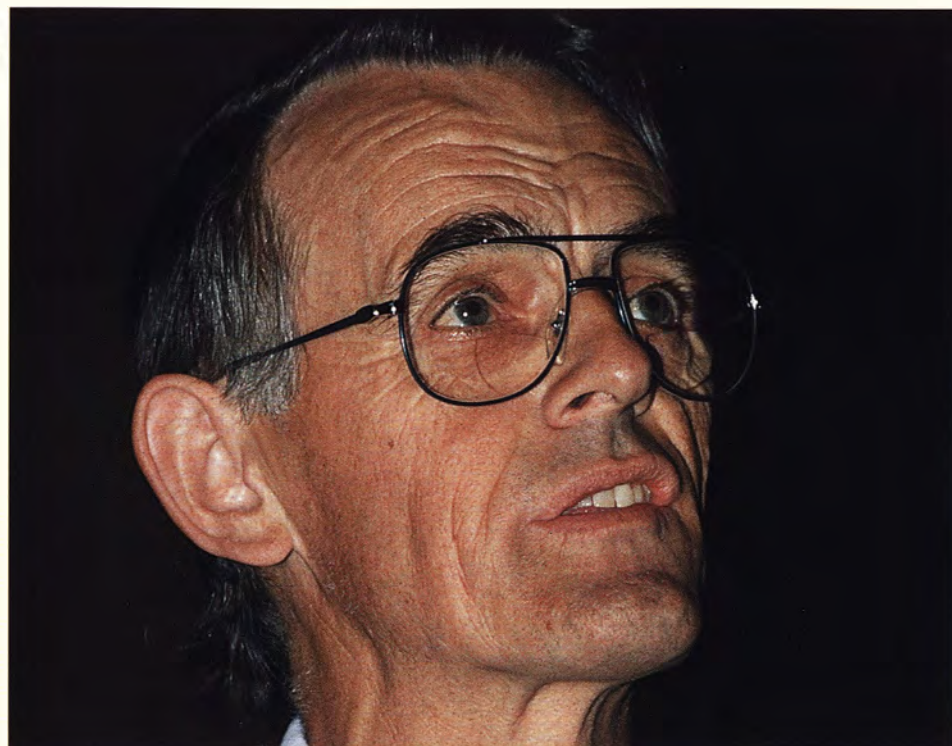
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## No to taxfree backhanders

Until 1980 corruption was not much discussed in the Scandinavian countries. There were occasional reports such as the Bofors scandal, when a Swedish arms manufacturer paid around US\$200 million in bribes to get contracts in India. But most people thought corruption was something that happened in other parts of the world and Scandinavia's hands were fairly clean.

At the height of the 1980s oil exploration in the North Sea, cases of Norwegian exporters paying large bribes began to come to light. An executive in the Norwegian state oil company was convicted after having accepted bribes from a German steel pipe manufacturer.

In 1988 the press reported that the Norwegian authorities were giving tax deductions on bribes Norwegian companies had paid in developing countries. The argument was that, as bribery was 'unavoidable' and 'part of the culture' in some countries, payments used to obtain contracts should be regarded as regular expenses. This information made me really angry and I remember thinking: 'This has gone too far. I must do something.' I wrote a strong letter of protest to the Norwegian Minister of Finance. Four of my friends, who like me had worked in developing countries, also signed the letter. We stated that bribery was totally unacceptable and that to make it tax deductible was to condone an immoral and harmful practice. The Minister replied that he would look into the matter.

At just that time, unknown to me,

Norwegian State Television (NRK) was setting up a TV panel discussion on bribery and was looking for a participant who would speak against it. The Finance Ministry gave them my name and they got in touch with me. I agreed to take part and suggested that the programme should also include someone from Africa. The producer arranged an interview with a Nigerian friend of mine who was visiting Oslo, and this appeared as part of the one-hour programme.

The members of the panel were the Director of Taxation, four prominent businessmen, a politician and me. The programme revealed some shocking attitudes and business practices, and I found myself almost alone in rejecting bribery. Over the following days there was a lot of media interest and the matter was taken up in a parliamentary question to the Minister of Finance. A few weeks later, he announced that he was ending tax deduction for bribes and this became law two years later. Denmark introduced similar legislation in 1998 and Sweden followed suit in 1999.

In recent years there have been important developments on the international level, which suggest a change of attitude towards corruption. In 1993 the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) asked member states to stop tax deduction for bribes, and a working committee of the European Union has made a similar recommendation. In 1999 an OECD Convention made bribery a criminal offence, and the European Council has also prohibited it. For the last 20 years, American companies who pay bribes in foreign countries have

When Norwegian doctor

Sturla Johnson

discovered that bribery

was tax deductible, he felt

he had to do something.

been liable to criminal prosecution.

The World Bank has also joined the battle. In its 1997 *World Development Report* it concluded that corruption blocks development in poor countries. For instance, it stated, corruption makes the judiciary unpredictable, skews recruitment towards connections rather than qualifications and twists political decisions.

Transparency International (TI), an NGO founded in Germany in 1993, now has chapters in 77 countries and keeps a close watch on corruption worldwide. In 1999, the Norwegian Minister of Development Aid and Human Rights, Hilde Frafjord Johnson, announced that her government wanted to cooperate closely with TI and that in the future Norwegian aid would be conditional on recipient countries tackling corruption effectively. 'Corruption is one of the most formidable blocks to development,' she said.

I believe that laws and conventions are essential but not enough. Each of us can find ourselves in situations where there is a danger of being bought. For instance, on one occasion a computer salesman offered me a gift of software as he was leaving my office. I was tempted to accept, because it was something I badly needed for my own computer. But in the end I refused. The man was hoping to sell personal computers to the people working in my department. Saying no freed my hands to choose the supplier who gave us the best offer.

As a doctor, I am conscious that at times the relationship between my profession and the pharmaceutical industry has been too close. The industry sponsors medical meetings which are important to us doctors. On our side, our choice of the drugs we prescribe to our patients affects the industry's profits. The industry has tried to influence us by offering us trips, expensive dinners and books, and we have happily accepted.

In 1998, the Norwegian Medical Association and the pharmaceutical industry got together to straighten things out. Certain doubtful practices were stopped and things are now in the open. These days, when the pharmaceutical industry sends out invitations to lectures and seminars, they are accompanied by a standard letter stating clearly what is and is not included. ■



## Clearing the picture

Having a clear head and spending more evenings at home led Jim Sharp, a commercial artist from Liverpool, to the invention of a ground-breaking process to enhance picture reproduction in newspapers.

'Liverpool is a real community and an exciting place to live,' he says. He was born and raised in Toxteth, an area of the city that has since achieved a negative fame for its riots. 'We were a very close-knit family—with aunts and uncles and cousins living back to back with us and Nan (grandmother) in the next street.'

One day, on the way to school when he was about 12, he saw a sign writer working at the top of a ladder. 'He was hand-lettering a wonderful sign. Then and there I decided that was what I wanted to do when I left school.' He persuaded his parents to let him enrol in the Art High School, where half the day was spent studying art. 'Everyone leaving there was snapped up by the advertising industry,' he says. At 16 he started work in an ad agency and within five years he and his friend Stan McCaffrey had started their own commercial art studio, McCaffrey and Sharp. 'At 21 I looked too young to be in business, so I grew a beard,' he jokes.

By the time he reached his early thirties the studio was a success, employing more and more staff, and he and his wife Rita had settled in a nice house in a pleasant suburb. 'I thought life was great, that the world was my oyster and that it would go on for ever.'

But there was a problem. More and more frequently the working day would end up in the pub 'for a swift relaxing drink—anyway that was the theory. The truth was that often the beer would flow late into the night.' His habit was becoming serious and beginning to cause arguments at home.

Sharp's wife Rita had got to know two Canadian women at a women's group she attended. Soon they were frequent visitors to the Sharp home and eventually invited Rita to a weekend in London to see an MRA musical show. On the spur of the moment Sharp decided he would go too. 'No drinking and two days on your best behaviour—can you cope with that?' Rita flung at him.

'That made me all the more determined to go!' he says.

The show and the weekend had a profound effect, as did a booklet he was given. 'It opened my eyes and made me rethink the way I was living,' he recalls. 'I was challenged to think what I really wanted from life. Things were not right at home, so I decided that changes were needed.'

As well as having two children of their own the Sharps had been acting as foster parents for others—'45 over a period of 12 years, not all at once'—and he had left this 'too much' to Rita. He decided to give her more support and also to stop drinking. The biggest difficulty with the latter decision was not stopping but coping with his friends' reactions.

Slowly things began to improve at home.

'We became a closer family unit. When someone asked my wife if I had changed, she said it was like Jekyll and Hyde!'

One evening at home, he came up with a totally new idea of how to make photographs clearer in newspapers. He talked with Rita about it into the early hours and the next day registered it at the patent office.

The process, which he called Schafline High Definition, was taken up by advertising agencies all over Britain. A separate company was formed and before long overseas franchises had been established in New York, Paris, Madrid, Sydney and other cities. Over 120 jobs were created.

By the early Nineties new computer technology had made the process redundant. But Sharp had already begun to move into a new speciality—3D graphic printing. Today his techniques in this field are also in demand internationally. His Pinsharp 3D Conversion system has been used, for example, by Kellogg's Australia, Disney Paris, Ladybird Books, News International and BBC Worldwide—printing 3D dinosaurs.

'Jim Sharp represents a glowing ember of the imaginative and entrepreneurial spirit that once made Liverpool so great,' wrote a *Liverpool Daily Post* columnist. Sharp himself says, 'It's amazing how a simple decision can change your life and that of others too. I dread to think what would have happened if I hadn't gone to London. I would probably have carried on drinking till I became an alcoholic; Rita would probably have left me; Schafline would never have been invented; and 150 jobs would never have been created.'

Paul Williams



## WEBSITE

by Robert Webb

### No room for shyness

**W**hen I was in first grade I was so shy that when my family moved from one town to another I would only hang around the edges of the playground at my new school. I dared not try to invade a circle of youngsters I didn't know. Gradually I lost some of that shyness, but as late as my early teens I dreaded the start of school for the talks I'd have to make in English class.

With the help of some of my teachers, I suppose, and the growing knowledge that if I wanted to be a journalist I'd have to be a lot more outgoing, I lost more of my shyness. Even speechmaking became easier. By the time I entered university I was able to speak well enough to be exempt from the freshman course in oral communication.

Later I found a new motivation—to work for a better society based on seeking God's will and on aiming to live by the highest moral standards. I found that caring for other people became an important concern, and at this point any remaining shyness fled.

I thought of this in connection with a new friend I met earlier this year when my country was agonizing over the 24 Navy personnel being detained on Hainan Island off the coast of China. Chiyung Wang, a young journalist, was having breakfast in a National

Press Club restaurant in Washington the morning I sat down near him. At the time I knew nothing of his background. Turned out he was from the area of the Yangtze River where China is building a massive dam.

We talked. He told me he was a graduate student in the University of Missouri Washington journalism programme and, as such, wrote for a Kansas newspaper. We got

**'I refused to believe my sole task was to expose public officials'**

on well. I told him something of my experience of inner change; and how I found it far more satisfying to write to heal and reconcile than to feed the fires of conflict as I once had done. He asked me to participate in research for his master's degree thesis. I happily agreed.

The key to forging lasting friendships, I think, is to be genuinely interested in the other person. And to listen. At least that's

been my experience. Take, for example, the student journalist, Erin, I met in Los Angeles three years ago when she turned up at a workshop of the International Communications Forum. Thrilled with the workshop, she told me about her aspirations. I listened. Last year I joyfully accepted her invitation to speak to journalism students at her university and to attend her graduation this May.

As a journalist I violated a rule of some reporters by making friends with the politicians I covered. I wanted to know them better. I tried to give readers a fuller picture of what their elected officials were doing and wanted to accomplish. It didn't mean officeholders were always happy with what I wrote. One powerful politician objected strongly to columns attacking his efforts to control an agency charged with choosing school textbooks. But I refused to believe my sole task was to expose public officials' wrongdoing. Better for them and their constituents to try to inspire them and draw out their strong points.

In this regard, it was a joy to meet recently E Gyimah-Boadi, a Ghanaian political science professor who is executive director of the Centre for Democratic Development in his country. At the International Forum for Democratic Studies in Washington, DC, he outlined Ghana's long struggle for democracy—which led to the peaceful transition of power after the presidential election last December.

Gyimah-Boadi outlined how a free and independent media in Ghana had helped 'level the playing field' by reporting impartially on the election. Such a media could also help immeasurably to heal the wounds from a hard-fought election.

*Robert Webb is a former columnist and editorial writer for 'The Cincinnati Enquirer'. He lives in Alexandria, Va, USA.*

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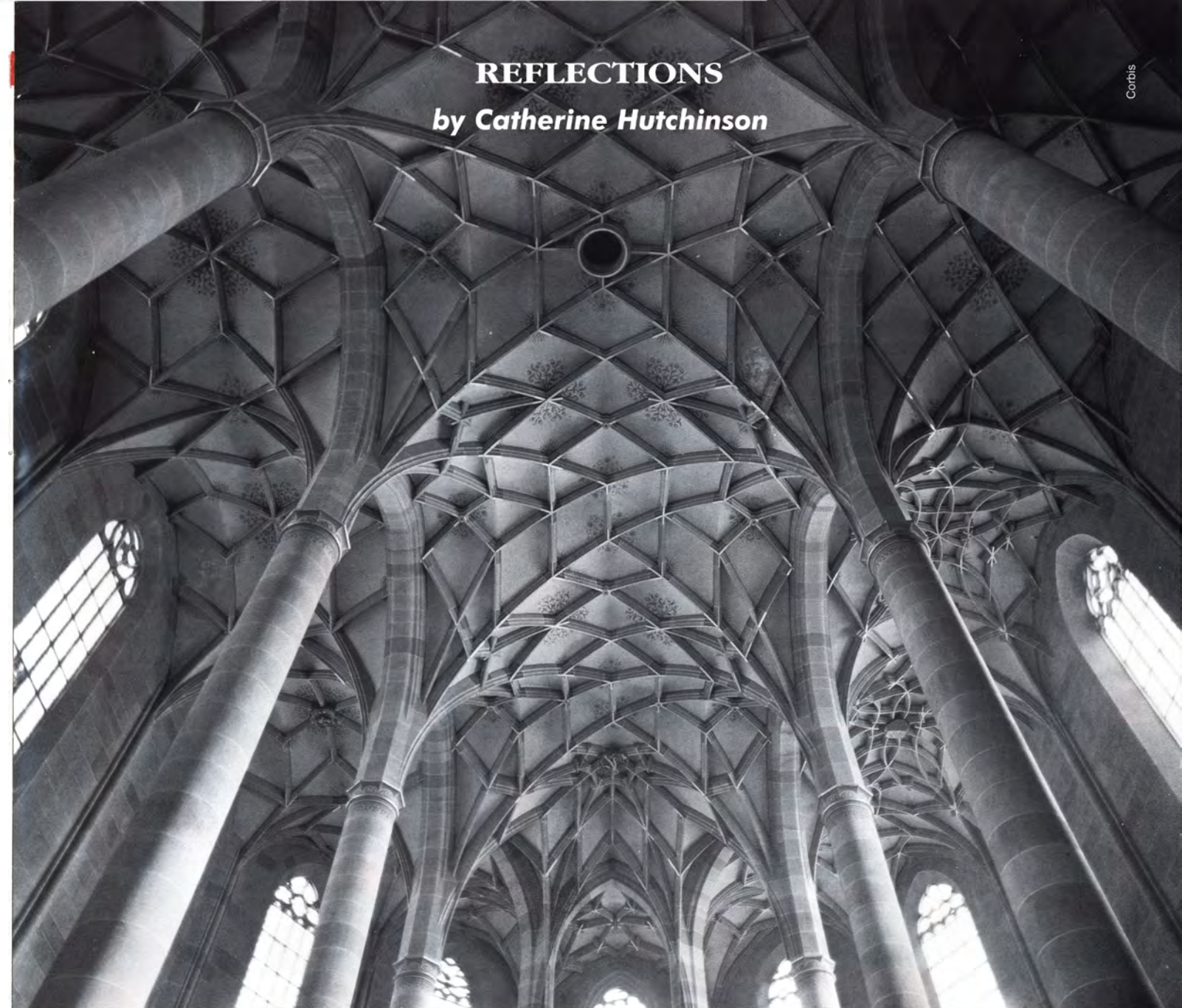
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## REFLECTIONS

by Catherine Hutchinson



## Creativity and healing

**I** have just spent a week in Oxford: a city full of old colleges. In their mediaeval chapels I listen to the choristers sing motets which seem to match the architecture of the buildings. I hear the voices of the Renaissance polyphony meet and cross each other so that their different rhythms create a complex pattern and, while I listen, my eye follows the intricate criss-crossing lines of the fan vaulting of the ceiling—an example of architectural structure being turned into something decorative and beautiful.

These chapels, the music, their paintings and sculptures, were all built, written, created to the praise of God—and this motivation has continued down the centuries. Of course there was money involved: the Church and

the colleges were rich. But there was also a basic belief in a creator God who was in charge of all things, including our destinies.

This God not only created the Earth, and the good things on it—the woods, the animals, us—but he also created the quality in each of us that makes us create. Where some make artistically beautiful things, others are drawn to build, to invent, to do old things in new ways, or perhaps to strive towards some vision of perfection.

In my own small way, I sing and I paint. To adapt a phrase from the Olympic runner, Eric Liddell, 'When I sing I feel God's pleasure'—well sometimes I do. When it is going well, I feel in tune both with myself and with God's bigger creation. It seems that we are most creative when we are truly open at many levels of our being—and this is

particularly true of the voice because the body needs to resonate freely to sing well.

But being open means that at other times when I sing or paint, I feel dark moods of despair, anger, fear—sides of myself I do not like. And here I have a choice, because I know I can offer not just my lack of talent to the creator God, but also my blackness and my vulnerability to this God who also heals.

Just as it is here in Oxford. As I listen to the strands of the music, and absorb the atmosphere of the chapel, I am able to stop, to be still and pray. I can step outside my life with its busyness, its joys and frustrations, and hold it up to this God who represents the very best that I know. Then as I step out into the street an hour later, I find I am given new faith, new inspiration, and maybe a way forward.