CONTINUING TO CONTRIBUTE

A major reason why former UN Staff get together is that, after having served, they have been accustomed to looking at the world and its problems as a whole rather than in narrow interests of individual countries. They have learnt to talk a common language (not official jargon) of universality. While some are content to become observers of the international stage after separation, many still feel the need to continue to contribute something, however modest, to the cause they gave their lives to.

This is reflected in recent years in discussions at meetings of EAFICS (the Federation of Association of Former International Civil Servants) that have moved beyond purely bread and butter issues, like pensions (FAFICS represents pensioners on the UN Joint Staff Pension Board) and health insurance. (It has just adopted principles on which after-service health insurance should be based.)

Although these remain major concerns, there is now consideration of a role for FAFICS as an NGO in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Commission and of former staff helping with projects. There is the splendid example, for instance, of a colleague who continued to contribute through assignments in difficult postings with the UN Volunteers.

According to Aamir Ali, former chairman of the UNJSPB, of CCAQ (the UN Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions) and now chairman of FAFICS, we are nearly 30,000 strong and our numbers grow every year. Over 10,000 of us are members of 14 associations affiliated with FAFICS (in New York, Geneva, Rome, Paris, London, Vienna, Bangalore, New Delhi, Santiago, Sydney, Copenhagen, Montreal, Buenos Aires and Mexico).

There are nine other newly-established associations or groups in the process or being set up, not affiliated with FAFICS (in New Zealand, Moscow, Kiev, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Warsaw, Rio, Bombay and Turin). And there are two associations, ILO and WHO, linked to their respective staff associations.

There is a deep pool of knowledge and experience in former staff that can be tapped. Those who wish to — there may be many — can help strengthen the UN system and efforts to establish a more orderly world and a more just world order.

FAFICS is attempting to organize a collective contribution, an initiative to be applauded.
**Better Extra-Budgetary Than Budgetary**

The management of the 1992-1993 biennium from the regular budget is proving difficult for two main reasons:

- First, because cost increases (that is the allowances for inflation) have been greater in reality than envisaged for. As a consequence, at the global and interregional level, we estimate about a $20 million shortfall out of the total biennial budget of $258 million. Similar difficulties are being experienced at the regional level.

- Second we project a larger shortfall in contributions than normal, (as is the case also with other UN agencies), as a consequence of recent political and economic developments in a number of countries. Thus a contingent reduction of 10 per cent was made worldwide in working allocations at the start of the year. This amounts to about a $73 million cut out of the total budget of $735 million.

There has been the need to make programme reductions including the freezing of a good number of vacant posts. The reductions as a consequence of the shortfall have been concentrated in areas where activities could be restored relatively easily if a higher level of contributions than expected is received.

Extrabudgetary funding, however, is keeping up well.

— Denis G. Aitken
Assistant Director General

P.S. The financial crisis led to a general meeting on 5 March 1992 and a follow-up on 23 June between serving colleagues and the Administration. Here are the three questions asked about former staff and the answers, as excerpted from the bulletin “Spotlight”, No. 51:

Q: Is it necessary to hire former staff who left WHO on the basis of 30 years or more pension?
A: When making a decision to hire someone, the fact of 30 years pension is irrelevant. An investigation of the financial means of a candidate for a post is not appropriate.

Q: How many former staff members work as consultants?
A: 19.

Q: Pourquoi certains anciens membres du personnel travaillent-ils dans l’unité où ils étaient actifs (alors que le règlement du personnel l’interdit)?
A: Staff rules do not forbid this. In fact, this is a very logical situation.

(The Administration also reported that 51 out of 96 serving colleagues who had enquired about “golden handshakes” had decided to take them, thus “the saving will be $4.5 million”.)

***Thanks for the Memory***

Sincere thanks to Marie Louise Howard-Jones for donating to the Association proceeds from the sale of the book: “Senex: The Lighter Side of Norman Howard-Jones”, a collection of articles written by her husband, Norman, for the now defunct, and badly-missed, staff publication “WHO Dialogue”.

Former director of the editorial and translation office, Normann, who passed away in 1985, showed in his work an amused impatience with the trivia of bureaucracy and pomposity, while dealing with basically serious business. Written in most enjoyable language.

Copies available from the Association, tel: 3103, mornings only. Price: SFr. 8.00.

***Reminder***

Following a reorganization of the Finance Unit, former staff administered by Headquarters are reminded to address correspondence related to health insurance to Mrs A. Van Hulle-Colbert, Head SHI. She is also Secretary, Headquarters Surveillance Committee.
Health Corner

THE DELIGHTS OF LIFE EXPECTANCY

I had coffee the other day with a statistician, a fellow-pensioner. We were both born in 1922 and were celebrating our 70th birthday.

- Do you realize, he said, that our life expectancy increases with age? Look at this graph. The first column at each age refers to Switzerland, the second to the USA, the third to Barbados, the fourth to Pakistan. At age 60, when we retired, our average life expectancy was 78. Having now reached the venerable age of 70, it has increased to 82. When we become 80, we may live up to 87; if we survive our 85th birthday, we still may have 5 years to go! And (using UN slang) it makes no difference whether we live in a developed or a developing country.

- So, let's make a date for another cup of coffee in 2002, I replied. If Health is for All for 2000, why shouldn't it be for retirees as well?

— Tom Strasser

CHANGES, CHANGES (MORE)

The following are recent staff appointments:

Family Health • Dr Tomris Törmen, formerly Director-General of Maternal and Child Care and Family Planning, Ministry of Health, Turkey, has been appointed Director, Division of Family Health (FHE).
• Dr Leila Mehra, formerly medical officer, has been promoted to Chief, Family Planning and Population from 1 July 1992.

Personnel • Mr Dario Sanvincenti, formerly Director, Support Programme, SEARO, has been appointed Director, Division of Personnel.

Tropical Diseases • Dr Pieter de Raadt, formerly Associate Director, has been promoted Director, Division of Control of Tropical Diseases (CTD).

Veterinary Public Health • Dr François-Xavier Meslin has been appointed Chief, Veterinary Public Health (VPH).

AIDS • Dr Benjamin M. Nkowane has been appointed Chief of the newly-established Epidemiological Research and Forecasting Unit, GPA, and Mrs Gunilla Ernberg, formerly Technical Officer, Chief, Administrative Support Services.

Director-General's Office • Mr D. Berg has been appointed Programme Manager of the restructured Information Technology Office (ITO).

Publications • Dr A. Hussein, head, Periodicals has been named responsible officer for World Health Forum and World Health magazine following the disestablishment of the World Health Journals Unit.

Health Adviser, UNHCR • Sir Donald Acheson who retired in 1991 as Britain's Chief Medical Officer has been appointed public health adviser to UNHCR for former Yugoslavia.

Publications • Dr Lyagoubi-Ouahchi, formerly Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the UN, Geneva has been appointed Director, Health and Biomedical Information, HBI.

Regions • Dr Liu Xirong, formerly Director, Drug Policy, Environmental Health and Health Technology, WPRO, has been appointed Director, Programme Management in the regional office.
THE ‘NOTIONAL’ APPEAL: WHERE IT STANDS

As the News goes to press, the Administration had yet to file its surrejoinder — the final written plea — with the ILO Tribunal in the appeal against increases in health insurance that went into effect in 1990.

With the support of the Association, three Appellants are challenging the increase. The appeal at the first level, heard last November was lost, with the Board of Appeals at Headquarters concluding that the increases “do not constitute a breach of acquired rights”, and that they were applied “according to procedures laid down”.

The case is now with the ILO Tribunal. In the event of a favourable judgement, the Administration has agreed to apply it to all pensioners affected — and not only to the three Appellants. It is expected that a judgement be rendered late this year.

The following are major Administration arguments and Appellants counter-arguments, as provided by Mr Klaus Samson, legal representative of the Appellants:

- **Argument**: That it is inequitable for those with many years of service to pay higher premiums than those with less. It said the decision to base premiums of all pensioners on 30 years corrects that anomaly.
- **Counter-argument**: Appellants contend the Administration errs in assuming that pensioners with short service have lower pensions — and, therefore, pay lower premiums — than pensioners with longer service.

They show that a P5 official with 15 years has a higher pension than a P1 with 30 years; and that a P4 with 15 years has a pension practically identical with that of a P1 with 30 years.

Appellants have challenged the Administration to explain why payment of premiums on the amount of pension is not equitable. The principle of “solidarity” should apply, they state.

- **Argument**: That those who join WHO late in their career would have income from other sources, such as a second pension.
- **Counter-argument**: Appellants showed, however, by their own circumstances and a sample of 20 other cases, that many pensioners, even those from industrialized countries, do not have other pensions, and that, when they do, those pensions are always far below a UN pension. Premiums based on a notional 30 years are therefore out of line with reality.

- **Argument**: Faced with those facts, the Administration changed its position, arguing that other pension was irrelevant, and that it had no knowledge of such income. It also argued that serving staff paid premiums on higher amounts of income.
- **Counter-argument**: The Appellants challenge is based on three grounds: that the administrative decision was taken on the basis of an incorrect consideration of facts and therefore is arbitrary; that it offends the principle of non-discrimination; and that it violates acquired rights.

The written pleadings run to 50 pages, supported by 25 annexes. The contain references to judgements of the Tribunal, to law of the international civil service, and to ILO decisions on social security.

The Chronology of the Appeal

- **January ’90** The Administration introduces a new minimum — and higher — premium based on a “notional” 30 years' service, applicable to past as well as future pensioners.
- **March ’90** WHO informs pensioners of the increase which in some cases have jumped by 600 per cent.
- **April-June** The Administration rejects requests by Association for reconsideration.
- **August** Appeals are filed with the Headquarters Board of Appeal.
- **September to May 1991** Appeals suspended pending negotiations between the Association and the Administration. They fail.
May 1991 The appeal is reinstated.  
September The Administration files its reply.  
November Hearings.  
3 January 1992 The Director-General informs Appellants of the Board’s conclusion that the “notional” premium does not constitute a breach of acquired rights. He accepts that conclusion. (More details in News, No. 8, Winter 1991-1992). The second stage of the appeal begins.  
18 February Appellants file with the ILO Administrative Tribunal.  
22 May The Administration files its reply.  
2 July Appellants file their rejoinder.  
When the Administration files a surrejoinder, written pleadings should be complete.

UN and EEC

More awareness of the needs of senior citizens are reflected in these decisions:
— The UN General Assembly, last december, adopting 18 principles “To add life to the years that have been added to life.” Among them that older persons be given the opportunity to work and the choice to stop, in short no mandatory retirement. — The EEC designating 1993 as the European Year for the Elderly and proposing that a charter of rights be adopted next year.

In the Press

BREAKING THE AGE MYTH

The Commonwealth Fund has analyzed two companies (in the United States and in Britain) that deliberately recruited workers over age 50. The results were myth-breakers:

In 1986, The Days Inns of America began hiring workers over 50 as reservations clerks. The demands sounded like an older worker’s nightmare: The telecommunications equipment was sophisticated, 25,000 calls were logged daily and the offices operated 24 hours a day.

Older workers took two weeks to master the computers, the same as younger workers. The over-50 workers stayed on the job an average of three years versus one year for the others. Older workers spent a minute more on each call, but booked more reservations.

In Britain, the results were more startling. B&Q, a hardware and home appliance chain, hired only workers over 50 for a new outlet, then pitted its performance against five other stores. The over-50 store was 18 percent more profitable than the others. Employee turnover was six times lower.

The study emphasizes that even those over normal retirement age have less and less desire to ride into the sunset on a golf cart. Graying workers are ready to learn new tricks, and they want the opportunity to show off the old ones.

(Excerpted from N.Y Times, 14 June ’91)

Quotable

“We want people to know that grandmothers are not just the ones with their hair in a bun, sitting in a rocker crocheting.”

Vigdis Waernes, organizer of the Bodo, Norway, Grandmothers’ Festival, where grannies are invited to sky-dive, ride motorcycles, race horses and scuba dive in the frigid waters 50 miles above the Arctic Circle.

— Newsweek

Letters

(Unless writers state to the contrary, letters are routinely considered for publication to encourage an exchange of views. — Editor)

Volunteers

I wish you every success in your venture to enlist former staff in a voluntary scheme, (Spring issue, No. 9). I would have liked to help, but unfortunately I am now visually impaired. I am a former WHO nurse working in AFRO, EMRO, SEARO and WPRO.

— E. Evelene Bennett
Bristol, UK
ONE ASSIGNMENT

Re the editorial in the Spring issue (No. 9) and continued WHO service, colleagues may be interested to know that my recent assignment as Technical Officer on a Short Term Professional Contract (STP) was to help find an alternative solution to the 13% project support costs that would be acceptable to the World Bank. A solution was found.

— Fredy Biegel
Prangins, Vaud

LIFE AFTER 60

The Spring issue is full of interesting items. "People against Parasites" by Dr Tore Godal, Director TDR, was of great interest and brought me up to date on subjects that once were "my bread and butter".

I had the honour to serve WHO from 1954 till 1978, when I had to - prematurely - leave, after a myocardial infarctus and triple bypass. I had hoped that my service would be retained till the obligatory retirement age of 60 in a post at HQ, after having spent all my active years in the field. Unfortunately my application did not succeed.

Instead I am proving that not only life begins at 60, but that it can be active and rewarding after surgery. Over the last 15 years I have spent much time in the Austrian and Swiss Alps, usually at 1500m. altitude, walking up to nearly 3000m.

Having been a moderate smoker of long standing, I not only succeeded in breaking the habit, but also have had the satisfaction of persuading others to do likewise.

— Fredrich Tross
Vernouillet-Dreux, Franc

LOW INCOME PENSIONS

I write to express my disappointment with the health insurance plan.

My wife is a patient at a hospital care facility at Ganges, British Columbia. For some years I was able to maintain her costs within my income. But I felt obliged to ask for assistance from the health insurance in 1990. I received assurances that I would be reimbursed 50% of costs. Then stony silence followed for two years. Recently I received a letter saying that the Surveillance Committees of both Washington and Geneva had decided to rescind the decision for reimbursement.

Since premiums have trebled, which means I cannot pay and since my financial circumstances have not improved, I must resign from the plan.

— R.L. Jacques
British Columbia, Canada

NOT IN THE UK

In your query whether health insurance premiums are deductible from taxes, my experience in the UK is that income tax relief cannot be claimed on contributions to WHO's health insurance.

Another load to carry. Can this be taken up with countries concerned?

Sincerely.

— Peter Jolly
Woodbridge, UK

(2nd request: Would a colleague living in France with experience advise whether health insurance premiums are deductible from taxes. In Switzerland they are, how about across the border? Send reply to News.

— Editor)

JUSTICE DELAYED

The delays involved in the legal procedures are very tiresome. I no longer know how much of a refund we are claiming, nor whether the compensation is a fixed sum or a cumulative one. Nor would I know how much a claimant's estate would benefit in the event of his death before the final award is assessed.

I thank the Association once more for efforts on our behalf.

— Charles Garrett-Jones
Abingdon, UK

(See item on page 4 for up-date. — Editor)

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