RESTRUCTURING WHO, ‘93

The staff are committed to working alongside the Administration for meaningful reforms so that WHO can carry out its mission effectively.

Please understand me. We are not looking for token gestures. Substantive changes can come about only if the staff, both technical and supportive, who are truly involved with the day-to-day work of WHO, participate in a sincere and meaningful way, right from the start. Anything less will fail.

The Chairman of the Staff Committee has committed the Staff Association to the effort of reforming and restructuring of WHO which the Director-General has undertaken to carry out.

For our part, we former WHO staff, representing the institutional memory of WHO and rich in experience of many years of service, pledge to participate in this task if and when called upon to do so.

Stanislas Flache
General Secretary

We are awaiting the outcome of the Director-General’s pledge to undertake whatever steps are necessary, including appropriate staff actions, to overcome the shortcomings that have been found as a result of the recent audit. We commend those persons who, in their concern, brought these matters to the attention of the Chairman of the Board.

A survey conducted recently by the Staff Association at headquarters indicates that a clear majority of staff believe that the effectiveness of WHO is worse today than it was a few years ago. One should view these findings with grave concern, and I do, but one should also be encouraged by the internal criticisms and proposals for change. Those replying made many excellent suggestions. Let me highlight some of the more widely held views:

In this issue:
- Joining forces ............................................. 2
- Changes, changes, more ................................ 2
- Health Corner ............................................. 3
- URSSAF - Watzat ? ........................................ 3

In the house ................................................. 4
- Lifestyles .................................................. 4
- In the press .................................................. 5
JOINING FORCES

The Association has concluded an agreement with AAFI/AFICS which will reinforce the work of both organizations. Through two representatives on the AAFI/AFICS Committee, we will participate in shaping policies for the representatives of pensioners system-wide.

AFFI/AFICS will continue to bear the main responsibility for pension questions in the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS/FAAFI) and in the U.N. Joint Staff Pension Board, the International Civil Service Commission and other interagency bodies.

Members of the WHO Association who are not members of AAFI/AFICS, are encouraged to become annual or life members at a reduced fee: SF 20.- for annual, SF 200.- for life, less 44 per cent of the amount already paid in dues to WHO.

Members receive publications including quarterly reports on changes in the value of the U.S. dollar against major currencies, taxation of pensions, the double track system.

Geneva is home to seven agencies in the U.N. family; the agreement with AFFI/AFICS will ensure that all former staff act through one association.

For more information, write AAFI/AFICS Room C.542-1, Palais des Nations.

OUR MEMBERS

All revisions received by mid-May are included in the Directory of Members enclosed with this mailing of News. The next up-date (of paid-up members) is scheduled for the beginning of 1994. Membership cards now in production will be sent to those listed.

CHANGES, CHANGES (MORE)

The following are recent staff appointments:

Human Reproduction

- Dr G. Benagiano, formerly Director of the First Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University “La Sapienza”, Rome, has been appointed as Director of the Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HPR).
- Dr P.F.A. Van Look, formerly Acting Director, has been appointed Associate Director.

Women

- Dr Tomris Turmen, Director, Division of Family Health, and Focal Point for Women, Health and Development, has been appointed as Adviser to the Director-General on the employment and participation of women in WHO.

Interagency Affairs

- Dr Y. Kawaguchi, formerly Director, Planning, Coordination and Cooperation, has been appointed as Director of a new Division of Interagency Affairs.

International Cooperation

- Dr M. Jancoes has been appointed Associate Director of the Office of International Cooperation.

Regional Offices

- Dr Ayite Manko D’Almeida, formerly Director, Support to National Health Systems, AFRO, has been appointed as Director, Programme Management.
Health Corner

AGING AND SEXUALITY (3)

This third (and last) column on sex and the elderly deals with disease as a barrier to sexual expression. As stated earlier, aging itself is no bar to sex; but diseases are more common in the elderly than in middle age, and they may impede sexual activity. The question is, how often and to what extent?

Treatment with some - but not all - drugs against hypertension may cause erectile failure and decrease in libido. In such cases, treatment should switch to a drug from another "family," there are at least seven such "families" of antihypertensive drugs.

While long-standing diabetes may cause sexual dysfunction in both females and males, myocardial infarction, once the acute stage is over, is no reason to abstain from sexual activity; on the contrary, so-called over-protection of the patient should be avoided. Encouragement to sexual activity is part of the psychological rehabilitation procedures in patients with past myocardial infarction.

Neither prostatectomy nor hysterectomy lead inevitably to sexual inactivity, especially with the newer, improved surgical techniques which affect only rarely pelvic blood and nerve supply.

In conclusion, even in the elderly, sexual function may be preserved despite the history of serious diseases.

— Tom Strasser, M.D.
(formerly CVD)

URSSAF — WATZAT?

Over the past months, colleagues living in France have been receiving a notice from URSSAF (Union de Recouvrement des cotisations de Sécurité Sociale et d'Allocations familiales, de l'Ain). Up until recently, most recipients were unaware that such an outfit existed. Now, they do but many are uncertain of the implications of the notice. Among questions asked:

1. What does it mean in general to French nationals, to non-French nationals?
2. Do I have to pay anything?
3. And if I do, what do I get in return?
4. Most importantly, is there anything I must do immediately?

An English translation of the three substantive paragraphs of the notice follows (for original text, see French version of News):

"You have worked in Switzerland and are currently receiving a retirement pension awarded to you in accordance with the regulations of that country.

"However, you are domiciled in France for tax purposes and therefore liable to pay the Contribution Sociale Généralisée on that income, unless you are able to show that your taxes are already deducted at source in accordance with the tax convention signed with Switzerland.

"Accordingly, unless you transmit to us within a fortnight a copy of the tax certificate issued by the Swiss administration for the year 1992, we shall register you with effect from 1 January 1993."

This then is an SOS to colleagues for information, addressed to those completely or even partially in the know from colleagues who are bewildered. (Send information to News — Editor.)
IN THE HOUSE

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ASSEMBLY

In key decisions during the two-week long World Health Assembly last May, some 1,400 delegates from 172 countries:

- Admitted Tuvalu to membership raising the total now to 186 — eleven more than a year ago.
- Adopted a US$ 1.8 billion budget for 1994-95, made up of $822,101,000 from assessed contributions and $1 billion from extra-budgetary funding.
- Called for a new impetus against tuberculosis, which is rapidly increasing in both developed and developing countries.
- Re-elected Dr Hiroshi Nakajima as Director-General, by 93-58 with 6 abstentions, for a second five-year term of office beginning July.
- Reiterated the goal of global eradication of poliomyelitis by the year 2000.
- Requested the D-G to reinforce WHO leadership against malaria, a disease which threatens 2,200 million people, about 40% of the world population.
- Requested the D-G “to develop an improved budget and accounting process which provides a clearer, simpler presentation.”
- Requested also that he establish a “policy regarding contractual relations and employment of Board members, alternates and advisers....”
- Requested that the International Court of Justice give an advisory opinion on whether the use of nuclear weapons constitutes a breach of international law, including violation of the WHO Constitution.
- Urged the U.N. Secretary-General to ban the sale and use of tobacco products in all installations over the next two years.

LIFESTYLES

WPRO COLLEAGUE IS AUSSIE “HUMANIST”

Dr John Hirshman a veteran of 17 years of service with WPRO has been named “Australian Humanist of the Year” for 1992-1993 in recognition of 40 years of work in international medicine. Now 71, he started his career in 1949 working in post-war Germany for the International Refugee Organization. Today he teaches at the University of New South Wales. He is the founding president of the non-government aid organization, Australian Third World Health Group and President of the Australian Association of Former International Civil Servants.

“Individuals like me, even working through something like the World Health Organization or other organizations, can achieve things.” Dr Hirshman told the Australian in an interview. “Even if they are small pieces of a mosaic.”

In 1964 he was seconded for a year as a regional health adviser to Manila. That year turned into 17 years and took him to the position of director, health services.

WEDDING WISHES TO...

- Jill Pond, formerly with DGO, and husband Michel Moret, director of a Geneva company, on their marriage 14 May 1993.

Anything BUT “RETIRED”

- Ned Willard, formerly information officer in Geneva and New Delhi, put his linguistic skills to work as translator from French into English at the 19th animated film festival at Annecy last June.
- Dr Rodolphe Coigney, formerly Director, LUN, and Commander of the French Legion of
Honour, is creator of a photographic exhibit depicting the role of the Free French and the Resistance (de Gaulle et la France Libre), during World War II. He, himself, escaping the occupation, walked over the Pyrenees to Spain, made his way to England to join up.

The exhibit’s been displayed in New York, Washington and Paris.

THE ART OF GREAT-GRANDPARENTING

This item on the Coigney’s: since 14 February 1993, they’ve become great, grandparents, thanks to granddaughter Karine Rodengen and husband, of Ft. Lauderdale, and their twins. Great granddaughter, Chloe Marina, and great grandson, Kevin, were a sweetheart of a gift on Valentine’s Day.

(Shared joys are double joys. A blessed event, a family achievement? Share it with us and we’ll share it with others. — Editor.)

HOTEL RESIDENCE DU PARC, DIVONNE

An “international retirement home,” mainly for U.N. staff, has been proposed for the Hotel Residence du Parc in Divonne les Bains, France, to be refurbished and opened at the end of 1994. The building, part of the hotel complex adjacent to the Casino, has been closed for five years.

Accommodations will consist of 38 studios and 50 two-room flats with bath and kitchenette in a variety of sizes according to location, with the average rents varying from SF 2 125 for a studio and SF 3 400 for two rooms monthly, all furnished. (Non U.N. residents would pay 12 per cent higher rent.)

The residence would be governed by a Commission de Vie including a representative of AFICS. (see p. 2 for related story — Editor.) It would be non-profit: 55 per cent of rent for costs, services and staff, and 45 per cent for reconstruction costs repayable over a period of 18 years.

Mayor M. Etienne Blanc, happy at the prospect of the building being restored, promises to assist with permis de sejour, and other paper work for non-EEC nationals. Concessionary rates for recreational facilities (golf, tennis, ski de fond, thermal baths) are planned as well as reduced restaurant rates at the Hotel du Golf.

Although not a “medical” retirement home, rooms for consultation, treatment and massage are also planned for, also, a nurse, or medical student, 24 hours a day. Residents, however, would be expected to seek their medical care in the normal way, although links will be arranged with local doctors and clinics.

Some 300 former staff, including Rosemary Bell of the Association’s Executive Group, attended a meeting on 26 May where a project presentation was made. In reply to a question, it was stated that “people can stay as long as they pay the rent.”

Thanks are due to Mr Francis Blanchard, former Director-General of the ILO who made the original proposal, and to Mr Antonio Busca, also of ILO, who had worked on the project from the outset.

IN THE PRESS

“Well, I'll be darned. They had just walked away.”

WISDOM FROM A DISH TOWEL

I’ve grown accustomed to my dentures
To my deafness I’m resigned
I can handle my bifocals
But how I miss my mind.

(Excerpted from the article sold in the village of Broadway, England.)

PRO AND CON

A post-retirement stint in the office — it is almost six years since I retired — is interesting in more ways than one. While you are part of the sys-
tem, yet you are able to view everything with a certain degree of detachment that was not always possible in the past. This change in perspective enables one to bring a certain independence of outlook to bear on the work to be done. It is also conducive to a relaxed atmosphere.

Let me hasten to add that coming back to work is not all that easy, and certainly not so far as the wife is concerned, since she has become used to your pottering around at home, occasionally lending her a helping hand. You also miss your morning walks (if you happen to be an early riser) and the hour that you spend with the morning papers (doing the crossword puzzle most of the time, since there is hardly anything new in the news, anyway).

But the one thing that I truly miss is the brief post-lunch siesta that I have come to enjoy in the last few years.

(Excerpted from SEARO News, '93)

THE WEALTH OF WISDOM

The European Community will rightly have to pay attention to the needs of its old people whose views will now be presented by the Pensioners Parliament.

By the year 2000, nearly a quarter of the EC's people will be over 60. They are entitled to be heard; the Pensioners Parliament is an ideal forum, representing old people from every political persuasion and background. But this body has an even more important role than as a self-interested lobby.

All Europe can benefit from the wisdom and judgment of the members of the Pensioners Parliament; they should speak out on the vital issues affecting the EC. Europe's leaders will be wise to heed the voice of experience.

(European, editorial 13 February '93)

COUNTRY "NEEDS OLDER WORKERS"

Britain will have to use those aged between 50 and 75, currently a quarter of the population, to supplement its dwindling work force, says the Govern-

ment-backed Carnegie Inquiry.

It is predicted that by 2031 there will be 46 state pensioners for every 100 people of working age, compared with the present 30.

The proportion of people under 16 and over 64, already 36 per cent of the population, will rise to 41 per cent.

With unemployment at three million, the report says it is understandable that the young are given priority, "but we need to look ahead to the next century when the baby-boom generation, born in the late 1950s and early 1960s, enter the third age and retire".

It calls for a radical change in approach by Government and employers so that people can work into their 70s if they wish, with flexible pension arrangements.

The report says State pensions and employers' attitudes to retirement are locked into a rigid pre-war time-warp that hinders healthy, retired people, members of the "third age", from enjoying life and contributing to society.

The 150-page report, welcomed by Mr Tim Yeo, Junior Health Minister, was written by former industrialists, trade union leaders and sociologists — themselves mainly third-agers.

The three-year £1 million project received £300 000 of Government backing and was headed by the former civil service chief, Sir Kenneth Stowe.

It says the concept of a "sudden and compulsory" switch from full-time work to a period of inactivity made sense in the early 20th century. "It makes no sense for today's 50-, 60- or even 70-year-olds, still in good health."

"In a world where few jobs involve heavy manual work, much more can be done part-time and there are a host of other unpaid activities which can be a pleasure for the individual and of benefit to society."

The third age can be a fulfilling time for those with health and money.

— Peter Pallot,

(Excerpted from Daily Telegraph, 8 April '93)

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