Status Report: 1 Year Later

THE CASE OF THE MISSING MONEY

Whatever happened to the 154,000 Swiss francs, missing now for almost a year? three parties involved in the case are asking. Most badly of all, it is the colleague who lost the money who wants to know whether restitution will be made. So does the bank want to know, for the issue is more than the cash but trust. As does the Association, which is trying hard in the discharge of its duties to assist the colleague.

This much is known. The money represented a lifetime’s savings for the colleague from WPRO, a staff member for 23 years. It was held in Switzerland until November 1995. Noticing that the sum did not appear to his credit on his year-end statement, he queried the bank only then to discover that it had been transferred to Thailand — to a newly-opened account in his name. It was done, the bank explained, upon his instructions in a letter dated 20 December.

Responding, the colleague declared that he had issued no such instructions, and that consequently the signature was a forgery. The letter of transfer, typed in Roman characters, with paragraphs flush-left, block style, he said, was just not in his style of correspondence. He is the owner of a manual typewriter, with italic characters; he indents his paragraphs. More significantly, he charged that the bank was delinquent in not confirming to him directly the request for transfer of such a large amount.

While promising support in getting to the bottom of it all, the bank nonetheless denied fault. The signature matched the specimen signature on file, it argued, and as the letter referred to details in the account, which only insiders would know about, it was deemed authentic, and no further verification was needed. Moreover, the account in Thailand, to which the money was sent, carried the colleague’s name: Usually, the bank stated, forgers use a different name.

The colleague was advised that the Thai bank had been asked to freeze the sum transferred; then, raising some hopes, that just a partial withdrawal might have been made. In March however, he was notified that it was the entire sum that had been withdrawn. Later he learnt that there was no treaty covering banking practices between the two countries, making a resolution of the problem that much more difficult.

By that time the question of responsibility looked large. Today, almost a year after the fraud was discovered, it still remains unsettled: who is to pay?

Unanswered too are such basic questions as whether or not experts have been called in to determine the authenticity of the signature to the letter of 20 December 1995, and to examine the typeface. And also, whether or not the bank has insurance to cover itself in cases of fraud.

Meanwhile, not only has the colleague sought assistance from the Association, but also the administration and finance office in Manila, as well as his permanent mission in Geneva. It is understandable that he do so. For him, this has been an anxious and long, long wait that is still not over.

This is a case of a former staff member, but it could as well happen to serving staff.

— Peter Ozorio, Editor
A LUMP SUM: TAKING OR LEAVING IT

To lump or not to lump? Or stated differently, to take a partial pension or a full one? That’s the question probably asked most frequently by international civil servants, whether on pension or not.

Pensioners-in-waiting, who are at a turning point in life, wrestle over the question fervently. But it is asked also by long-time pensioners, albeit posed differently: Was the decision they took earlier, they ask themselves in thinking about it again, upon which there is no return, right or wrong?

A selection of their second thoughts has been published in the September issue of the AAFI/AFICS Bulletin in Geneva, and the October issue of Link, the newsletter of UNICEF pensioners in New Delhi. In the former case, pensioners responded to a three-question survey (which also included place of retirement and taxes).

Excerpts follow — to help pensioners-to-be make up their minds, as well as to reinforce pensioners in the decisions made earlier, or perhaps to regret them.

Taking It

— From the Bulletin, in response to the question: What led you to take or not to take the lump sum? Are you happy in your choice?

T. Ando (Japan): I took one third, the maximum, because I needed funds to renovate my house in Tokyo. However, I regretted my decision later, as it would have been more advantageous if I had borrowed from a bank, and taken the full pension. Immediately after my retirement the Yen became strong vis-a-vis the U.S. dollar, and the lump sum I took in dollars lost value — nearly 40 per cent — very quickly.

Salah Ayoub (Munich, Germany): I only took one ninth as lump sum. Why? I first enquired how much the cost of living was in Munich. I added to that the rent, telephone, radio, TV and the cost of running my car. I made provisions for travel, for the day I could no longer use a car or public transport, as well as for taxes. I multiplied that sum by two, and took the balance as a lump sum. So far I have no regrets.

E.M.B. (Geneva): Yes, because I have a residence secondaire in another country, and I invested my lump sum there, which has saved me a lot of fuss and bother about transferring money and making sure there is enough in the bank to cover local expenses. So, although I would advise most people with no dependants not to take the lump sum, I am happy that I did so.

Manuel Carillo (Geneva): I took the lump sum. Also a very simple choice. It permitted me to settle some problems and alleviate others, fulfil certain desires and thereby be more independent.

Ed Dowding (New Zealand): At the time of my retirement, investments returning in excess of 20 per cent tax free were readily available. The financial return on the lump sum far exceeded, over the short term, any income from the pension. I calculated the return carefully and in my case I had to draw a full pension for at least 15 years to break even. I am now about even, so in the future I am heading into negative territory.

As it is my intention to live another 20 years, I may decided in 2016 that I made the wrong decision. At the moment I am happy with the choice.

However, as it is unlikely that the financial markets will out-perform the pension fund over the next decade, and tax free returns are difficult to find, it is probably better to take the full pension — unless purchasing a house or property.

C.-H. Harder (Geneva): Yes, I took the lump sum. The choice was obvious at the time, given the high rates of return offered by the markets, especially for dollar bonds. Unfortunately, this situation did not last because both interest and dollar rates later declined continually. I suffered some losses despite the remedial measures I took. Still, I do not regret my decision, which was neither unreasonable nor unreasonable.

Theo Huber (Geneva): We took half the lump sum, mainly to aid one of our children purchase a house.

— From Link, New Delhi, which withheld names for "obvious reasons" it said:

- I had a debt and was obliged to pay in full at the time I retired at age 57 (I could have worked three more years but could no longer put up with the atmosphere at the office). I am very happy with my decision.
My husband took the lump sum to enable him to complete purchase of our house and was always happy with his choice.

I took the third. I was not confident that the U.N. Pension Fund would survive the political pressures. If it collapsed, I would have my third. In hindsight, it was probably not the right choice.

"You had more money than God. That’s a big no-no."
(The New Yorker, May 20, 1996)

LEAVING IT

— From the AAFII/AFICS Bulletin, Geneva:

Inez Holmes (Geneva): I did not take the lump sum for the following reasons: (1) Unsatisfactory exchange rate with the dollar (2) uncertainty of returns in the present economic climate. I like to know exactly what income I can expect. If I have a surplus at the end of the month, I can still invest it, without impairing my standard of living — even if the investments turn out to be less profitable than expected.

Yes, I am happy with my choice. I haven’t a care in the world. Admittedly, I have no dependents.

Ron Neath (England): I am glad I did not because my monthly pension is now much bigger. In a previous career in Africa I had done the opposite and took all the money. But in the years that followed, when inflation was rife, the few who had the courage not to grab everything enjoyed big cost of living bonuses every year. On retirement from the U.N., I felt reasonably fit and took a chance on living a lot more years. We have both managed this so far.

JdR (Malta): I am not a good gambler where lump sum investments are concerned, and I don’t need brokers and bankers to lose my money for me. So I opted for a larger pension, and a small portion in cash as a reserve for emergencies. I have no dependents and intend to live for a good few years yet (the Boss might have other plans, of course), so a regular, indexed income gives me some security, and I can gear my standard of living accordingly. I am happy with my choice.

Fernand Scheller (Geneva): I did not take the lump sum because I had no particular needs at the time.

— From Link, New Delhi:

My wife and I had no particular reason to need a lump sum. Our idea was to live as long as possible on the biggest possible pension. It still is.

I had no hesitation about not taking the lump sum, because I am not a person who enjoys playing about with the financial markets. So I am enjoying my full pension, which is tax free, thanks to the government of India. A lump sum would have meant investing here and there with related risk.

The lump sum alternative would have reduced my monthly benefit considerably, all the more so as mine was an early retirement. Moreover, I would have been at a loss how to invest wisely and safely a relatively large sum of money, and I would have to pay taxes on earnings. In my case it was “safety first.” I certainly don’t regret my choice.

I did not consider the lump sum because I come from a family that has a record of longevity.

HOMeward BOUND

To paraphrase Jane Austen slightly: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a man in possession of a good pension must be in want of a life." And, as Bill Barton so entertainingly informed us in Home to "Old Blighty" (Quarterly News, No. 26, Summer), when most of that adult life has been spent working in some, or even, as in my case all, of the six continents, it takes some deciding just where, and what, that life will be.

By no means an insignificant number of people are involved in taking these decisions. Currently there are nearly 110,000 U.N. pensioners and beneficiaries with almost 40,000 persons receiving monthly benefits around 5 per cent of which are from WHO.

For those with mixed-nationality marriages the choice is even more difficult: I know, my wife, There-sa-Ellen, is of Irish extraction, born in Wales!

Some colleagues who have spent many years in a particular region are seduced by a different lifestyle and culture, "go native," stay on and presumably live hap-

Quarterly News of the Association of Former WHO Staff
Anything but Retired

"I WENT TO NEW DELHI"

Was it ever exotic! We rode a few elephants, shot a few tigers, stuck a few pigs — you know the scene. Well, actually, it wasn’t a bit like that.

Although we were in New Delhi, at the Second International Conference on the Elimination of Leprosy in October, we saw almost nothing of India’s capital — apart from our hotel, SEARO premises, the Vigyan Bhawan Conference Centre and the broad and busy avenues that link those three places.

I was there as conference press officer, and a part of the energetic team from LEP.

Vigyan Bhawan — the Hall of Science — fell rather far short of glamour. There were fine examples of Indian art and sculpture sprinkled about, but since the unyielding security guards banned all cameras, those delights went unrecorded for posterity. Tight security on the first day was understandable, when Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda opened the conference, since India has all too recently had two assassinated. But the second and third days had no such dignitaries, yet the security never let up.

The Meridien Hotel has a vast central “patio” into which one looks down from the windows of a gondola lift as it soars 20 stories high. The lifts even seem to emerge from “under water” since a fountain surrounds three sides of each gondola when it is at rest on the ground floor.

My hotel window looked out on the swimming pool, very attractive under a blue if smoggy sky where the temperature stood at a balmy 31 degrees C day after day. It seemed a good idea to wash away the cares of a rather frantic day. “Don’t dive” was written on the poolside, so I dived — and came up gasping. A sign I hadn’t seen showed the water was an icy 21 degrees; I don’t even paddle in a pool until the water reaches 24 degrees. The hotel must be passing the pool water through the kitchen’s deep freeze.

I had sterling support from a small local firm of PR consultants, who honoured me by inviting me to a Son et Lumière performance at the famous Red Fort. We plunged into the maelstrom of Old Delhi’s traffic, but the surge of trishaws, hooting and flashing taxis, bicycles and wandering cows beat even my friend and we arrived too late for the show. We compensated by eating a delicious spicy meal at a restaurant specialising in Baluchistan dishes.

The Conference was a stunning success. India’s Prime Minister and 13 health ministers from leprosy-endemic countries reaffirmed their commitment to the WHO goal of eliminating leprosy as a public health problem by the year 2000. “We are determined to do it,” the Indian Health Minister declared. “Send this message to the world.”

— John Bland
(formerly Editor, World Health, now consultant to LEP)

Homeward Bound (from page 3)

pily ever after. Others return to their home countries but retain a foothold on another shore and happily commute between the two in an almost perpetual travelling mode.

Many retirees from the colder climes find sunshine so irresistible they put down their roots in a place where their tan may never fade. If the wine is good that may be taken as an agreeable bonus.

Expatriates from countries where life can be difficult and unpredictable often find the more stable lifestyles of the developed countries more to their taste, though the economic cost of living in these places is usually high and hefty housing costs and taxes may make life painfully expensive for the unprepared.

There are even those who choose their retirement homes on the basis of the concession of tax-free U.N. pensions granted by certain countries, though recent changes in the pension fund regulations now make this option decidedly less attractive than was previously the case.

But most pensioners, I suspect, are drawn by that irresistible urge to return to their own. Even if the children are located across the globe, and many old friends and relatives dead, have moved on or are just out of touch, there seems to be something special and very satisfying about returning to the land of one’s birth and youth; to the language, culture and even the weather, which you knew when young, ante-WHO...

To be detached again from foreign cultures, different life styles and ways, no matter how pleasant they may be: To be no longer a guest but a host.

— David Payne
(WHO '58 - '92)
Penarth, Wales
Alzheimer

“I spent the whole morning looking for my glasses,” complained Albert, my coffee partner, and added, with a touch of humour: “This happens when you mislay your glasses, which should help you to find things.” And then, with more than a touch of worry: “I hope that’s not the beginning of what you call an Alzheimer.”

No, Albert, it is not; it is just an example of benign old-age forgetfulness; let us not exaggerate. Alzheimer’s disease is more serious than that. It was Alois Alzheimer who described in 1907 a special disease of the brain in a 51 year old woman, too young to be considered senile, but with all the symptoms of senile dementia. The condition was called “pre-senile” dementia, a term that was dropped later, since the disease may start in the sixties or seventies. It progresses gradually, the patient’s condition declines steadily, although the symptoms may plateau for a time.

Says the Merck Manual of Geriatrics: “The early stage is characterized by loss of recent memory, inability to learn and retain new information, language problems (especially word finding), mood swings, and personality changes. Patients may have progressive difficulty performing activities of daily living... Abstract thinking or proper judgement may be diminished. Patients may respond to loss of control and memory with irritability, hostility and agitation.... Although the early stage may not compromise sociability, families may report strange behaviour (e.g. the patient gets lost on the way to the store or forgets the name of a recent dinner guest), accompanied by the onset of emotional lability.”

Alzheimer’s disease is not curable, but treatment is essential. Tacrine, the drug usually given, cannot produce miracles, but may be helpful in some cases. On the other hand, many other drugs commonly taken by elderly people, e.g. antidepressants and antihistamines, may have negative effects on brain function. The rule “as few drugs as possible” is thus fully valid once again. Care should be given to the patient’s environment: it should be simplified, and maintained safe and secure. Such persons should remain as active as possible; they should take part in the activities of the family (provided they do have a family) but avoid activities that may cause confusion or anxiety.

As a matter of fact, the family suffers more than patients, who may be unaware of their condition (the disease is more frequent in women than in men); but the proportion of elderly women living alone is rapidly increasing, either because they survive the family or they are rejected by it.

“So, what about my memory and my incipient Alzheimer, if any?” asked Albert, not at all reassured by my verbose explanations. Oh yes, you are a typical case of an acute loss of-spectacles-induced mental confusion.

This syndrome is described in the current issue of the Quarterly News (No. 27, Autumn 1996). It is a variant of benign senescent forgetfulness. According to the Merck Manual, “...people who have this condition and who are concerned about having early Alzheimer’s disease should be reassured that a decrease in learning speed and recall is part of normal aging,”—like it or not (my addition).

Having worked in epidemiology much of my time, let me add that: (a) most elderly people do need glasses; (b) most of those who wear glasses do mislay them repeatedly; and, (c) how could you not get upset about it? This is, dear Albert, the definition of normality of the day. So, let us have a piece of chocolate cake with our coffee.

—Tom Strasser, M.D.
(formerly CVD)
Health

NEW TREATMENT FOR LUNG CANCER

Lung cancer, particularly when discovered early, may now be successfully treated by the less invasive procedure of video-assisted thoracoscopic resection, instead of the traditional opening of the chest.

My bilateral squamous cell carcinoma was removed by this relatively new method at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, by Dr Mark F. Krasna, one of the pioneers of the thoracoscopic chest surgery who has written a profusely illustrated book on the subject. The right lung was done last October, and the left lung in December. In each operation three holes were made in the lateral chest wall, where trochars were placed for the insertion of the light and video camera and the staplers used in cutting the affected tissue.

Each operation lasted one and one-half hours, and I was discharged from the hospital in two days. If I was operated on in the traditional way, my convalescence would have taken many, many months.

Radiation five days a week for five weeks was done on the left lung as a precaution, otherwise everything went well up to this time. My x-ray and CT scan of the chest last July showed no recurrence. I was breathless after moderate exertion, due to some pneumonitis/fibrosis following the prolonged radiation, which was alleviated by a short course of steroids.

I understand that thoracoscopic resection of the lung is also done in Geneva, but I preferred to have mine done by a surgeon who has performed the operation more than 400 times.

—Francisco J. Dy, M.D.
(WHO Regional Director Emeritus)

Pension

CERTIFY OR SUFFER

If you’ve received something from the U.N. pension fund at about this time, pay proper attention. If you don’t, and treat it as just another statement of your “periodic benefits,” not requiring immediate attention, you may be in for a sorry surprise. For, this is the time when the fund sends out its Certificate of Entitlement, which seeks assurance that you “continue to be entitled to benefits,” and that your residence has not changed.

Raymond Gieri, Secretary of the fund, reported in his letter to participants in January 1996 that some 300 pensions had been suspended for non-return of the certificate. This has led to the suggestion that pensioners would react right quickly if the fund were to mark envelopes in bold letters “Certificate of Entitlement” — to distinguish it from other routine correspondence.

Legal

DIVORCE, DEATH & ALIMONY

Don’t divorce, but if you do, insist on alimony! This seemingly is the thing to do to retain survivor benefits, according to Judgement No. 1402 (re Mrs. Emileen Lebourgeois) of the ILO Tribunal.

The case centered on the pension of appellant’s former husband, a staff member of CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research), from whom she was divorced in 1975. He re-married in 1980, passing away five years later. The appellant, who never remarried, claimed that the survivor’s benefit should be shared between herself and the second wife proportionate to the length of their marriages: 25 years for her versus five. She lost her appeal.

Why? Under CERN regulations, as reported by the U.N. Joint Staff Pension Board in May 1996, “a divorced wife is entitled to a widow’s pension only if, at the time of death, the husband was required to pay alimony. In this case, there was no alimony order in force.”

The U.N. pension board routinely publishes summaries of judgements by both the ILO and U.N. tribunals in which pension and health are the issues. By far the vast majority of the 15 appellants failed to identify —

NEWS AND VIEWS

Ready for the Flu

WHO’s medical service has recommended vaccination against influenza for those over age 50, and in particular for “those suffering from chronic lung, cardiovascular or kidney diseases, from diabetes, and for people convalescing after a severe illness of operation.”

According to Information Circular No. 96/60, serving staff will be vaccinated free, though not their families, nor former staff. In these cases, however, the health insurance plan, naturally enough, will bear the cost.
Executive Group to Serve Additional Year

The term of office of the Association’s Executive Group has been extended from two to three years following amendment of its statutes at the staff’s Annual General Meeting on 17 October 1995, with those already serving, staying on for an additional year — if willing to.

This followed a circular letter dated 10 May 1996 sent by Chairman R. Pal advising the membership that “10 out of 13 members of the Executive Group have indicated their willingness to serve for a third year, without having their mandates formally renewed.”

However, the letter went on to say, “colleagues who have reservations are asked to make their views known by 1 July 1996.” The letter, which cited “administrative and financial constraints” for extending the term of office, also said that “at the next election of the Executive Group, candidates will be elected to three-year terms.”

The members of the Executive Group serving until September 1997 comprise the following: Rajindar Pal, Chairman; 1st Vice-Chairman and Treasurer; Joe Chang-Wailing; 2nd Vice-Chairman: Roberto Masironi. Members: Yves Beigbeder, Gerard Dazin, Stanislas Flache, Gerard Perrin, Vitorino Pinto and Alain Vessereau.

Coopted Members: Warren Firth and Thalanayar Sundaresan.

“The Executive Group regrets the departure of Margaret Baker, Rosemary Bell (both former vice-chairmen), Carlo Fedele, and Eilif Liisberg,” it said in its 3-page, 1995-96 annual report.

Delay, Delay Just Won’t Do

In another decision, Judgement No. 1486 (re Wassef), favourable to the appellant, and therefore rare, the Tribunal criticized the FAO administration for refusing to address substance, and for essentially engaging in “dilatory tactics” to “hold-up” the determination of entitlements in a case of a health claim.

The appellant’s request on 4 March 1994 for a review of his case was met with “needless delay,” the judges said, “further delay,” and then “much more delay, quite out of proportion to the simple and straightforward issue involved: Was his illness service-incurred?”

A year later — on 16 March 1995 — appellant filed a complaint with the tribunal. Finding that “the facts are simple” and that “hepatitis B is endemic in Chad,” it concluded that the appellant’s illness “must be assumed to have been directly due to his assignment by the FAO to an area posing a special hazard to his health... and therefore to be service-incurred...”

The judges ordered the FAO administration to “determine his entitlements accordingly.”

Life Membership

As of now, the cost of life membership, which is 250 CHF, is reduced by yearly fees already paid. From 1 January 1997 however, following a decision of the Association’s Executive Group, the reduction will be 50 per cent of what’s paid. This means that the credit accorded is slightly less.

In addition, says Treasurer, Joe Chang-Wailing, “all former staff who are not yet members are cordially invited to join.”

Double Digits

As of 18 September 1996, you must resort to 10, 12 and 13 digits to be connected to French phones.

For domestic calls, you must add two-digit prefixes (01, 02, 03, 04 or 05) to the existing eight-digit number.

Example: The prefix for Haute Savoie and Pays de Gex is 04, which added to the old eight gives the following new ten-digit number: 04 50 40 58 51.

For international calls add (33), the country code, plus 4 50 40 58 51, to make a total of 11 digits. Note that the O is dropped from the 04.

However, to call from neighbouring Switzerland, dial 059 450 50 58 51 — or 12 digits.

Fresh Air Mauritius

Citing recommendations of WHO and the International Civil Aviation Agency, which is located in Montreal, Air Mauritius declared all flights smoke-free from July 1996, thus joining the increasing number of carriers promoting “fresh air” travel.

For years this airline has contributed a free ticket to Mauritius for the raffle in support of the Association’s annual reception.

Information Please

The Editor needs information about death taxes, probates, and the like — the dismal subjects — to report on. Would much appreciate those knowledgeable in Switzerland, France, and elsewhere sending information in.

Also, he is calling for contributions of personal experiences that would interest readers (like those narrated by Bill Barton of Exmouth, England, in QN 25, 26). Will colleagues willing to share views submit texts for consideration.

To meet editorial requirements, no more than 500 words, please. Letters would also be much appreciated, again, because of space, short ones.
REALLY FRIENDS

Donning a smock, Judy Dahl-Hansen, our colleague from Australia, produced this empheral, blue oil right on the spot — during a calm moment at her exhibition at WHO last September. In a splendid gesture of support for serving colleagues, she donated the painting for a raffle, the proceeds of which will go to the Solidarity Fund, which was established to assist those whose livelihood may be endangered by job cuts.

In commenting on this act, the Serpent enchaîné, the staff’s whimsical newsletter, said “occasional spats aside, there is a community of interest between former and serving colleagues.” Indeed, there is, despite family fights. (See also, “Strong Stuff from Serving Staff,” p 10.)

HERE COMES THE GROOM

Nedd Willard, formerly INF, has taken a bride, Poppy, once of New York, but most recently an American in Paris. He forgot the ring and had to borrow one, but never admitted to nervousness. They wed on 4 October, in Veyrier, Switzerland, in a civil ceremony presided over by “Madame le Maire,” to which a uniformed policeman in white gloves added pomp.

A twilight reception followed, under starry skies at a friend’s farm-house at the foot of the Salève. Among INF colleagues present on the occasion were Morris Sinclair, once director, and wife Mimi, plus Jery Kilker, formerly of the liaison office in New York.

The exuberant groom, just turned 70, is the father of Ethan, of Berkeley, California, and Briar Pa-meijer, now of Adelaide, Australia. The bride is mother of two daughters, Ludella and Amandine Billot, both in their early twenties and Parisiennes.

May the newly-weds, who reside in Geneva and Thorons-Glières, France, live a town-and-country life happily ever after.

NOT IN THE VOWS

The following was No. 1 of the acknowledgements made by serving colleague, Soco Litsios, CTD, in his recently-published book on malaria which is reviewed on page p 9:

To Susan, my wife, who had to endure more malaria stories that our marriage vows had prepared her for and who helped me read my words (and commas) with greater care.

e-mail: orders@nhbs.co.uk Fax: +44 1803 865 280)
THE MALARIA WARS

We may gasp at a technological feat like placing a man-boy on the moon but many of us usually find science dull. A book like: "The Tomorrow of Malaria" by serving colleague Socrates Litsios, CTD, might help change this perception for it shows how the application of science affects the lives of everyday people.

The author has managed to cram facts, history, speculation, developments from one World Health Assembly to another, and from one Expert Committee to the next, into a small paperback about the malaria wars.

In a 150-page narration, he retraces homeric battles between irascible and fallible scientists who disagree violently with each other albeit in good faith; between those who believed that the right way to eliminate malaria was by improving the environment and the latter-day warriors who felt that with DDT sprays a victory over an ancient enemy was in sight.

By 1955, when WHO launched its malaria eradication campaign, Paul Russell an English malariologist could announce with exuberation that "malaria was on its way to oblivion." Fred Soper, Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, ancestor of PAHO, reflected the thinking of the time, confidently claiming that "man has it in his power to eradicate any mosquito anywhere."

The malarial parasite and the hospitable anopheles mosquitoes that carried it however, resisted extermination. And today, many battles later, there are strains of mosquitoes that sip the insecticides of the past and the new, increasingly dangerous ones (for humans, that is) and survive, while the parasite has stubbornly refused to be "medicined" out of existence.

Eradication was abandoned in 1969 when the Assembly, meeting in Boston, switched the emphasis to control. The fight to control, and perhaps some day eradicate, malaria is now recognized as being long, drawn-out.

In the very last paragraph, the author says "if malaria is not controlled in the 21st century, it will no doubt because we have failed to put a stop to patterns of development which have destroyed natural resources, degraded environments, and uprooted and dehumanized peoples everywhere."

It is suggestive of his druthers in waging the malaria wars.

— Nedd Willard
(formerly INF, Geneva, New Delhi)

WELL MATCHED

The enjoyment of life after WHO for Dr. Adel Ismail, formerly of VBC, is to make the rounds of tennis tournaments for seniors, along with his wife Yvonne. Indeed, although he was once Egyptian champion and representative of his country in Davis Cup competition, it is his exploits on the senior circuit that Smash, the Swiss tennis magazine, recently saluted in a article titled Se revoir — Se quitter a jamais. ("One Comes Back — One Never Quits.")

His record is impressive. Now age 68, he twice captured (1993, 1995) the men’s singles title in the age 65-plus category of the Swiss International Seniors Tennis Championship. And, he was a finalist four times (1989 to 1992), in the 60-plus. This tournament draws some 200 players ages 40-to-75-and-up to Kloters every August.

He has been also a four-time winner of the National Championship of Switzerland: twice in the 60-plus category (1991, 1992); and twice in the 65-plus (1993, 1994). These successes have earned him a world ranking over the years ranging between 11 and 14 from the International Tennis Federation.

Not to be outdone, his wife Yvonne, a player herself of talent, won the ladies and mixed doubles championship in 1995 at the French International Championship of Congnac. The couple, obviously well matched, make their home nearby Geneva, at Confignon.

(A blessed event, a marriage, a family achievement? Share it with us, and we’ll share it with others. — Editor)
**GET WELL QUICK**

Best wishes for a speedy recovery to Stan Dota, formerly finance, who is recuperating from the coronary by-pass operation that he underwent recently. He makes his home, with wife Pauline, in St. Mandrier-sur-mer, near Marseilles.

**WORK CERTIFIED**

Yves Beigbeder, a member of the Association’s Executive Group, and formerly PER, has been awarded a certificate of recognition from the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences for his latest book, l’Or- ganisation Mondiale de la Santé, excerpts of which were carried in the Quarterly News, Spring Issue, No. 25, 1996 ("Route of Renovation.")

**IN THE HOUSE**

**2020 VISION**

By 2020 the number of elderly people — those 60 years and up — will total more than 1,000 million worldwide; some 10 million will live in developing countries.

The “oldest” country by then will be Japan (with 31 per cent of elderly), followed by Italy, Greece and Germany (above 28 per cent) and Switzerland (27.4 per cent). Today, Greece is the country with the highest proportion of elderly (22 per cent).

By 2020 the proportion of elderly will reach 23 per cent in North America, 17 per cent in East Asia, 12 per cent in Latin America and 10 per cent in South Asia.

Among the ten countries with the largest elderly populations by then will be seven in the developing world: China (231 million), India (145), Brazil (30), Indonesia (29), Pakistan (18), Mexico (15) and Bangladesh (14 million).

By 2020 three-quarters of all deaths in developing countries will be related to aging and caused by non-communicable diseases (diseases of the circulatory system, cancers, hypertension and diabetes).

To respond to public health challenges of population aging, WHO has established a programme on aging and health while disestablishing the one on health of the elderly. This puts the emphasis on “healthy aging” rather than on “the elderly”, according to a recent fact sheet (No. 135).

**STRONG STUFF FROM SERVING STAFF**

Former staff were mentioned five times in the just two resolutions — titled “For the Survival of WHO,” and more pertinently “Short Term Contracts” — adopted at the staff’s annual general meeting in October.

In the second resolution, serving colleagues said they were concerned at those “past retirement age working in HQ on short-term contracts over prolonged periods;” and that they were “appalled at the continual re-hiring of retired staff who are in receipt of a pension, thus providing fuel for accusations of double-dipping by critics of the U.N. system.”

In the first resolution, which was more directed at the management, the language they used was even stronger. They spoke of “WHO’s gradual loss of leadership in the field of international health.” They declared that the “inordinate size of high-level management owes more to patronage and cronyism than to any programmatic rationale,” and that personnel “continues to flout principles of fairness and fair application of Staff Rules.”

Among the proposals put forward were the following:

— That staff representatives work with the Administration to “establish criteria concerning the re-employment, under any terms, of retired staff” — a task with direct implications for former staff,

— That there be a “drastic reduction in the number of high-level posts, including ungraded staff;” and

— That “in view of the proven inability or unwillingness of the WHO management to undertake any meaningful reform,” an outside group be asked to do it.

In summary, the language, tone and content of the resolutions reflected what was foremost, and the anxiety, in the minds of serving colleagues — budget cuts and jobs in uncertain times.
HEALTH INSURANCE ON E-MAIL

When are we going to have a forum where all the members of the ASFM can freely express their opinions on the subjects which interest them? For example, the exorbitant cost of health insurance for retirees with less than 30 years of service. And, by the way, I would be very interested to know the percentage of retired medical doctors who managed to have 30 years of service for WHO, unless this is considered “top-secret”.

— Dr Jacques Pierre Ziegler
Munchenstein, Switzerland
(106163.235 compuserve.com)

(Shouldn’t be secret in these times of “transparency.” Rather, the difficulty would be having the list compiled. As for the health insurance increase, the forum has been long open for views. See, for instance, “Arbitrary Decisions” in QN No. 25, Spring 1996. This letter, by the way, is the first to be received by e-mail. — Editor)

KIND WORDS

Despite the inability of the Association to help me (financially in my appeal), I would like to express how much I appreciate the few, kind words of understanding and sympathy (in the letter of 6 October from Dr. R. Pal, Chairman). Apart from the support by the Ombudsman, they are the first I have received since 1983.

— David Brian Steele
(formerly consultant, EMRO, WHO-World Bank)
Les Sables D’Olonne, France

PAYING DUES

In view of the difficulty of transmitting money from France, I have had to wait till my daughter visited Geneva to send you membership dues for 1996.

I much appreciate the efforts you are making to keep us all in touch and to help us solve some of the problems that former staff face. It is encouraging to know that we can count on you.

— Joan Cha’aban
Jouy-Le-Moutier, France

I apologize for the delay in enclosing my cheque for membership dues for 1996. It has been caused by a rather long absence of work in Africa and eastern Asia. Many thanks for the good you are doing.

— Walther H. Wernsdorfer
Vienna, Austria

Enclosed is a transfer request to SBS for my dues. I only wish I could make it more, but alas! that will have to wait till we win the lottery.

Recently received QN 26, Summer. May I say how much I enjoyed reading all the contents. Thanks one and all for the wonderful work you are doing on our behalf.

— Ken Waldron
Brussels, Belgium

IN MEMORIAM

Therese, wife of Donald Alagiah, formerly public health engineer from 1971 to 1984 in Nigeria and Zimbabwe, passed away on 14 October 1996, in London, after a long illness. She will be sadly missed by her husband, her five children and fifteen grand children, as well as her friends who will remember her for her gentle and helpful nature.

— Rachael Stojan
Versoix, Switzerland

In the Press

DEMONIZING THE U.N.

Ed Dolan, 44, who works in Cedar Rapids, Iowa as a computer programmer for a long-distance phone company opposes gun controls. He spends a lot of time worrying that the United States is menaced by a shadowy plot to take over the world.

“I consider the United Nations the greatest threat to our personal liberty and to this republic,” he says.
Loras Schulte, 46, who was a manager of Patrick J. Buchanan's winning campaign in Iowa's Republican presidential primary, agreed. "It wants the power to tax American citizens, to have its own central bank and treasury, to regulate trade between us and other countries. It's a blueprint for a socialist government spanning the world."

Deep suspicions of the United Nations are evident in the frequent alarms — including repeated but unsubstantiated reports of UN "black helicopters" on mysterious missions on U.S. territory — that spread through rightist computer and fax networks and radio talk shows.

**FUN AT WORK**

"Frankly, I get bored on vacation. It's much more fun to be at work here, blocking reforms, flying my black helicopters, imposing global taxes, demoralizing my staff..."  

U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, mocking his critics quoted in Newsweek.

The rightist views have found a voice in the Republican majority in Congress, especially among House freshmen, some of whom have joined Senate conservatives in calling for American withdrawal from the United Nations if it does not enact major reforms. Secretary-General Boutros Soutros Ghali has become a symbol of what conservatives dislike about the United Nations.

The administration decided that he must go if there was to be any hope of improving the U.N.'s image on Capitol Hill. That stance, combined with Washington's failure to pay more than $1 billion in back dues, has vexed American allies and friends abroad.

Ed Luck, a senior consultant to the U.N. General Assembly said that "defending the U.N. is not a top priority for the political mainstream, so the right is able to shape the debate almost by default."

The Clinton administration and the American diplomatic establishment have dismissed the more far-out critics as "nuts" or "paranoids."

Opinion polls show that most Americans support the United Nations. A survey last spring for the U.N. Association of America, a bipartisan group that seeks to educate people about the United States, found that 49 per cent of those who responded thought the U.N. was doing a good job, while 38 per cent gave it poor marks. Sixty-four percent said the United States always should pay its full dues on time. The poll was conducted by the Wirthlin Group, an organization normally associated with conservative causes.

—John M. Goshko  
(Excerpted from Washington Post Service 24 September 1996)

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The opinions of the News are those of the authors, not necessarily of AFSM.)