



STAFF NEWS



No. 53

April-June 1990

SPRING BRINGS —

The Executive Board

Beirut Staff Wins 1990 Award

The impressions this observer took away from the UNICEF Executive Board which met this year from 16-27 April at the United Nations building was that the Board felt there was much to be proud of and a few things on which we should proceed cautiously.

One of our successes often mentioned was what looks like total Universal Child Immunization (UCI) by the end of 1990. The coming World Summit For Children in September was called by Mr. Grant "an historic time for children" adding that the 1990s could prove to be the decade "children came into their own as a priority issue of world affairs."

Some donor nations at the EB were supportive of the Summit but cautious, warning that "the Summit should be no strain on the regular programs of UNICEF" (Finland), that it should not be

The GSA Reps To The AGM in New York

Spring in New York for UNICEF staff means the arrival of two welcome events: soft satin-petalled tulips around this hard, grey concrete town and representatives from field staff associations around the globe, to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) at UNICEF House.

This year's week-long session involved meetings with the seven representatives and various division managers. The participants were Radjy Asgar from Abidjan (Bangui) representing WCARO; Maria Fernanda Flores from Quito representing TACRO; Ahmed Moosa Rizk from Riyadh representing MENA; Jasper Morch from Jakarta representing EAPRO; Fred Ogwal-Oyee from Kampala, representing ESARO; Davy Perera from Colombo representing ROSCA; Penny Whitworth from Geneva representing Europe. Susan Fagan represented the NYSC. Ramesh-



Adhiratha Keefe in the G.A. Hall

PHOTO: RUBY MERA

And A Rousing Speech At A UN Staff Protest Rally By A UNICEF Colleague

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In the midst of meetings with the heads of such divisions as Personnel and the Pension Fund and hearing staff members discuss such local problems as day care, part time jobs, local staff associations, JCCs, ombudspersons, and local salary surveys, Mr. Grant addressed the group as well as New York staff.

"Basically we are a collection of ordinary people. . . but together we have made some miracles," Mr. Grant told the meeting in the Labouisse Hall of UNICEF House.

(Cont'd. on p. 5)



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And A Rousing Speech At A UN Staff Protest Rally By A UNICEF Colleague

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In response to staff concerns, Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar promised in a meeting with the staff to review the proposed pay scale and called for a special meeting of the joint Appeals Committee. The Committee's recommendations, which were due after 7 May, have still not been made public.

General service staff, who are the ones most affected by the pay cut, say they may lose almost all of a 4.6 per cent cost-of-living allowance they received last November because the International Civil

Service Commission (ICSC) claims they are being paid more than people doing similar work in other organizations.

The staff say a job comparison conducted by the ICSC was flawed, partly because it failed to recognize that some UN posts required academic qualifications.

On 27 March, the Administration called a meeting to which UNICEF DOP Director Fuad Kronfol was invited along with Andrew Joseph of UNDP and Luiz Gomez and Kofi Annan of the UN.

At one of the staff rallies held in the G.A. Hall UNICEF staff member Adhiratha Keefe delivered a speech he had written during his lunch break to the audience, which filled the 2500-seat au-

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UN Rally

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ditorium. As one UNICEF staff member wrote in a note to STAFF NEWS with the speech attached, "Adhiratha got a standing ovation from the entire audience. He made all of us at UNICEF feel so proud!" Here's Adhiratha's speech:

Since we have the time now I felt I would share what I wrote during the lunch break. I raised my hand rather late in the discussion this morning because I felt I wanted to hear what others had to say—especially the individuals who hold posts classified as general service.

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Is management style stressing staff?

posts since I first started working here nearly seventeen years ago. I am one of the small minority who have gone from G-2 to P-3 during that period. Some friends from my university days, who are outside the organization, might not think it so great to be at my level at my age after seventeen years—but that is not what I want to focus on.

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I perceive that the staff want the United Nations to set the example in all its activities—to be what it should be—and what many thought it was. Instead of justifying why it is not what it should be, the members of the administration should be coming up with concrete proposals and timetables for how the UN can become an organization where the development of *its* people is a main objective. If they believe that access to training opportunities is important—then this should become more of an issue with the Fifth Committee and other forums.

If there were a real career development plan—with substantive resources placed in meaningful training programmes for all levels of staff and not just for present duties, but for the duties one or two levels above where they are now, so they could be prepared to be considered for these posts when they become vacant—if this were the case, then we could think the administration was sincere in their recent arguments.

The organization must be ready for the changes in the world by attracting, training, retraining and retaining the best people it can, and not losing the idealists and those who speak out!

We must work to change this institution and, where necessary, ourselves, so that the organization and we—its people—can be more worthy of the hopes and wishes of all those who believe in the dream for this house.

Let us begin here! Let us begin with the staff—for a real career civil service. Let us prepare for the future.

The world expects it of us.

The dream must progress and become the reality.

Thank you.

Exec. Board

***“The organization must
not lose (its) idealists”***

As earlier speakers noted, many come here with great idealism, many leave and many lose their idealism. Some find their own ways to cope with disillusionment and some are lucky to have support groups and friends whose kind words—or more often their example—inspire us to continue.

But many deep down still believe in the reasons this organization was established. We stay because we want it to be a United Nations—a community of individuals from different cultures, nationalities and aspirations, but all joined together to bring about the vision set out in the charter. In our best times we are—as someone said earlier—simple people who have come here to serve this vision. But as someone has said: a bud is not a flower. And a seedling will never become a tree unless it grows and matures. So many of us are supporting this action because we see it as an effort to make the Administration of the United Nations address a problem not only of this issue and the results that have come out of the recent survey and proposed salary scale, but of the process whereby many decisions are made.

It is symptomatic of a far deeper problem, and I think since our colleagues of the Press from the Correspondents' Association were invited to attend this and many are here now, we should request them to use this opportunity to assist us in helping the wider audience to focus on the underlying issues.

It is not a simple matter of the GS staff wanting a raise (or not wanting a cut in salary). I have seen a number of employee attitude surveys over the years and it is always pointed out that individuals' first major concerns are not what they are paid—beyond a certain reasonable level. It is rather how they are treated and what real and perceived potential for growth they sense in the institution or organiza-

Exec. Board

(Cont'd. from p. 1)

world was widening, she hoped the Summit would offer opportunities to close that gap in the 1990s. Mr. Grant said that he hoped the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child would be achieved before the Summit. (Three countries had signed so far and twenty were needed.)

Mr. Grant emphasized that the Summit was seen first and foremost as a means for governments to strengthen and expand our programme delivery to children by providing the stimulus and impetus for governments to strengthen and expand programme actions.

Although praising UNICEF's increasing role in Africa, the EB wanted to know what UNICEF could do to help stem the spread of AIDS, which is not only affecting children's health directly but leaving many orphaned and destined to become street children. A new problem not heard before was what UNICEF could do to help children in Central and Eastern Europe. The EB approved up to \$1 million (US) per year for Central and Eastern European from general resources for 1990-92 provided there was no diversion of support from funds for developing countries.

Although Mr. Grant and Director of Operations Karin Lökhaug explained to the EB that UNICEF/N.Y. was experiencing a severe shortage of space at UNICEF House and in fact had frozen the hiring of sixty new staff members because there was no room, EB members were not satisfied that a primarily field-oriented organization needed more “prime New York real estate.” One Board member said that only three years ago the Board had approved a large sum of money for UNICEF's move to UNICEF House and was assured at the time the building

UN *Staff* REPORT

May 1990
UN Staff Union

The Voice of the Staff at New York Headquarters

VOL. 3, NO. 2

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As the Worm Turns

'WE'RE FED UP' SAY STAFF, AND PROVE IT

End to 'class system' demanded, 1660-0-1

Meetings, demonstrations, and an unusual welcome for the SG

Giant meetings and marches followed the International Civil Service Commission's recommendation that the salaries of staff belonging to the general service and related categories be cut by 4.63%.

At a meeting on 22 March, the staff adopted a resolution entitled "One UN, one staff" by 1660 votes to none, with one abstention. It was probably the first resolution in UN history to begin with the words "fed up". What the 1660 were fed up with was "the consistent pattern of discrimination against staff of the general service and related categories" and the "rampant demoralization of the general service staff" stemming from "the artificial and discriminatory division of the staff into categories which have hardened into a kind of social caste system with its attendant class mentality".

The resolution demanded that the SG "end forthwith the UN system of apartheid with the removal of all institutional, artificial and detrimental barriers to the attainment of an efficient and effective one-category international civil service with common benefits and allowances. This includes changing the present category nomenclature to a neutral, non-valuative one which encompasses all staff. We are all international civil servants and there should be no second-class citizens in the UN."

Lowell Flanders on SMCC

IT WAS UPHILL ALL THE WAY
But Secretariat staff reps were united

Though the Secretariat staff unions and associations and the administration saw eye to eye on almost nothing at the SMCC meetings in Geneva this March, the Staff Committee President says it certainly wasn't the fault of the staff representatives, who were very well prepared as a result of pre-session consultations among themselves.

**VACANCY
MANAGEMENT/PROMOTION**
UN Report asked Flanders to describe those staff consultations: "On the question of vacancy manage-

Fed-up . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

At the string of general meetings (nine in all), the salary survey proved to be the catalyst for speeches not restricted to the salary issue. The ICSC's recommendation was the last straw that had broken the embittered silence of a frustrated staff. Lack of career prospects, the division of the staff into watertight categories and administrative indifference were among the many concerns expressed by those who took the floor—not to mention the difficulty the Staff Committee was having in gaining access to the SG.

There was a standing ovation for a statement by Adhiratha Keefe, who summed up many of the frustrations of those present. To great applause, a

participant asked that his statement appear in full in *UN Report*. Here it is:

"I have held a few general service posts since I first started working here nearly 17 years ago," he said. "I am one of the small minority who have gone from G2 to P3 during that period. Some friends from my university days, who are outside the Organization, might not think it so great to be at my level at my age after 17 years. But that is not what I want to focus on.

"As early speakers noted, many come here with great idealism, many leave and many lose their idealism. Some find their own ways to cope with disillusionment and some are lucky to have support groups and friends whose kind words, or more often their example, inspire us to continue.

SERVING THE VISION

"But many deep down still believe in the reasons this Organization was established. We stay because we want it to be a United Nations—a community of individuals from different cultures and nationalities and with different aspirations, but all joined together to bring about the vision set out in the Charter. In our best times we are, as someone said earlier, simple people who have come here to serve this vision. But as someone has also said, a bud is not a flower. And a plant will never become a tree unless it grows and makes progress. So many of us are supporting this action because we see it as an effort to make the administration of the United Nations address a problem: not only this issue and the results that have come out of the recent survey and proposed

salary scale, but the process whereby many decisions are made.

"It is symptomatic of a far deeper problem, and I think since our colleagues of the press from the Correspondents' Association were invited to attend this meeting and many are here now, we should request them to use this opportunity to assist us in helping a wider audience to focus on the underlying issues.

"It is not a simple matter of the general service staff wanting a raise—or not wanting a cut in salary. I have seen a number of employee attitude surveys over the years, and it is always pointed out that individuals' first major concerns are not what they are paid, beyond a certain reasonable level. It is rather how they are treated and what real and perceived potential

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Fed-up . . .

(Continued from Page 2)

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SETTING AN EXAMPLE

"I perceive that the staff want the United Nations to set the example in all its activities, to be what it should be and what many thought it was. Instead of justifying why it is not what it should be, the members of the administration should be coming up with concrete proposals and timetables for how the UN can become an organization where the development of its people is a main objective. If they believe that access to training opportunities is important, then this should become more of an issue with the Fifth Committee and other forums.

"If there was a real career development plan, with substantive resources placed in meaningful training programmes for all levels of staff, and not just for present duties but for the duties one or two levels above where they are now, they could be prepared to be considered for those posts when they become vacant. If this was the case, then we could think the administration was sincere in their recent arguments.

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ed and corrected. With the changes going on in the world, we need to be better prepared to deal with things in a more transparent way. If necessary we need to discuss matters in this forum more often and with increased substance, as we have today, if the other means of representational activities are not effective.

"The Organization must be ready for the changes in the world by attracting, training and retraining the best people it can—and not losing the idealists and those who speak out.

"We must work to change this institution and where necessary ourselves so that the Organization and we, its people, can be more worthy of the hopes and wishes of all those who believe in the Dream for this house.

"Let us begin here. Let us begin with the staff—for a real career civil service. Let us prepare for the future. The world expects it of us. The Dream must progress and become the Reality."

Late in March the General Assembly hall was the scene of another large general meeting of the staff, but this time it was not a Union meeting; it was called by management. The administrations of the secretariat, UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF were represented at the podium. Luis Gomez, Acting Under-Secretary-General (Department of Administration and Management) and of Annan, Assistant Secretary-General (Office of Human Resource Management) addressed the staff, assuring them that no decision had been taken on the ICSC recommenda-

SG RETURNS, ADDRESSES STAFF

Much of the discontent manifested at the Union meetings had to do with the lack of response from the administration. The SG was out of town during most of the meetings, notably for a triumphant visit to Namibia to mark its entry into the comity of nations.

He returned on Monday, 16 April, when the staff were gathering at the Secretariat entrance for another demonstration, and was quickly ushered through the crowd and into the building.

Lowell Flanders then led the assembled staff on a complete tour of the Secretariat grounds. They carried placards in various languages not only expressing staff discontent with the salary-survey results but also calling attention to other staff grievances including the division of the staff into categories. Their concerns are apparent from the pictures in this issue. One placard read "SG RSVP", and chants wafted upwards from the crowd calling on the SG to come down to meet with the staff.

After a lengthy walk-around in the afternoon sun, Flanders led the crowd, placards and all, into the General Assembly hall, for a noisy meeting at which one excited speaker after another called for the Secretary-General to come down to address the gathering. Late in the afternoon the

Staff Committee President went up to the 38th floor and returned a little later with the Secretary-General, who entered the hall to a profound, expectant silence, with dozens of placards held high in the air. At last the staff was to hear what he had to say, which was as follows:

"Dear colleagues, as you know I arrived the day before yesterday from a long trip. It started in Windhoek, and actually on behalf of all of you I represented the United Nations at the Independence Day of Namibia.

"COMMON RESPONSIBILITY, COMMON MERIT"

"I would like to tell you, as I already have, that what has been achieved is not the success of the Secretary-General or of his special representative or of those who were in Namibia. I think it is our common success. I would like to emphasize that point very much today, and to tell you that I know very well that what has been achieved, and everything we can achieve before I leave this position, is our common responsibility and our common merit, and I understand your concerns very well.

"I have been informed very carefully by my colleagues Mr. Gomez and Mr. Kofi Annan, and indirectly by your President, Mr. Flanders, of your anxieties. Perhaps you have been informed not only that I have done everything possible in order to per-

(Continued on Page 10)



pleted seven or ten years of service so they could have intensive training to increase their skills and value to the Organization, and if there was better support for child care for the children of *all* the staff in our community, maybe there would be more trust that the latest decision, and how it was reached, was just a misunderstanding.

DON'T SCREEN US OUT

"Has the administration been treating our staff representatives with the respect they deserve? From what I have heard and seen, letters to the 38th floor from representatives or individuals go unanswered or even unacknowledged as being received unless one has political clout. The President of the Staff Union has to almost beg in order to get one meeting, when he should be on the regular schedule of the Secretary-General and not screened out by the so-called palace guard.

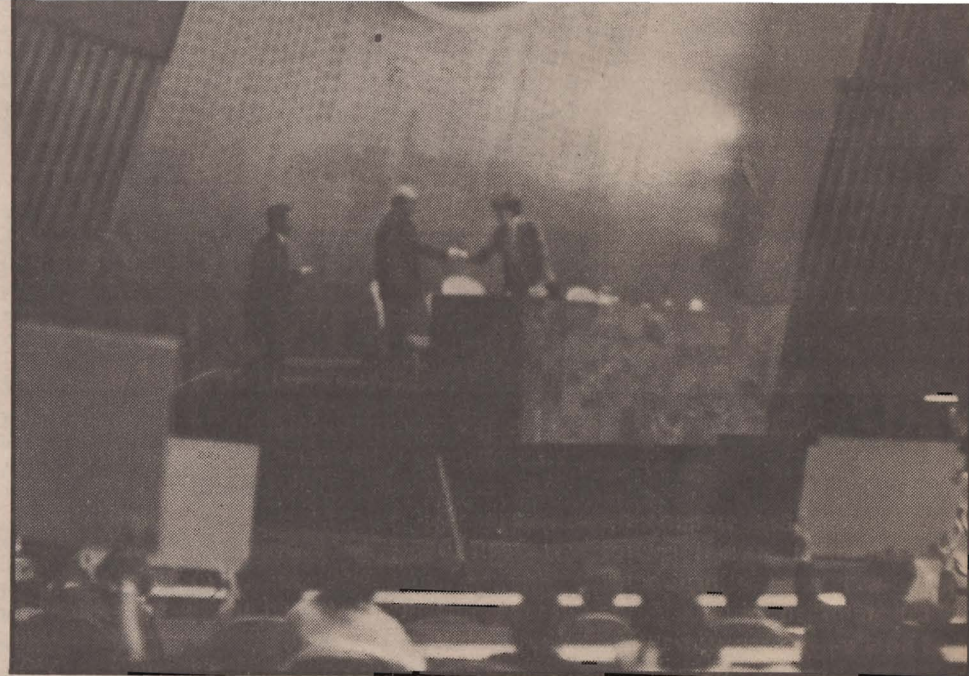
"The administration could have found more ways to support the staff on this issue.

"And one more thing—about risks. If there are risks to take in coming together and expressing our opinions, that should be for those of us who have permanent contracts. But we have to be clear about why we are taking those risks, and why we stand in solidarity with our colleagues. It is because we believe in the vision of the United Nations, the vision that many of our predecessors served.

"It is a responsibility to point out things that are wrong with this Organization so they can be address-

been taken on the ICSC recommendation and there was no intention to implement it at this time; it was not management's policy to reduce salaries, and if the recommendation were implemented any cuts would be spread over time until cost-of-living increases had "caught up". No staff member would receive a reduced pay cheque. The meeting was also told that management expected any further staff meetings to take place between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. or after hours so that the UN could continue to work normally. When Lowell Flanders said the staff still hadn't heard the SG's position on the salary survey, Gomez said he and Annan were expressing the views of the SG. There was a question and answer period, but clearly the staff weren't satisfied: the Union meetings and marches continued.

* * *



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Thank You.

- Adhiratha Keefe,
Unit 47 Representative
UN Staff Union

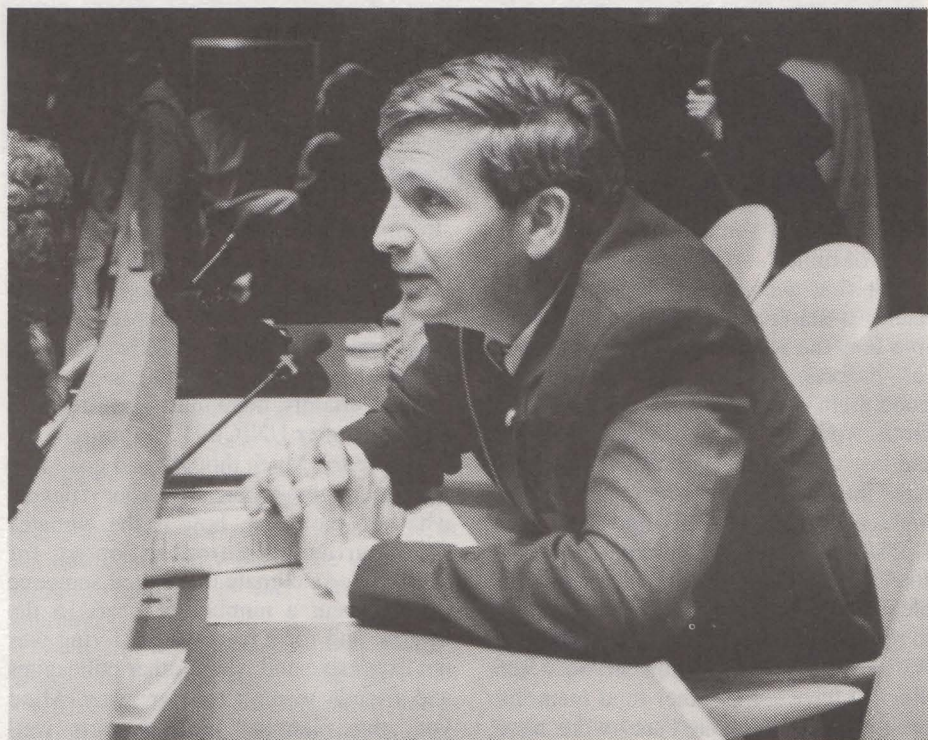


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