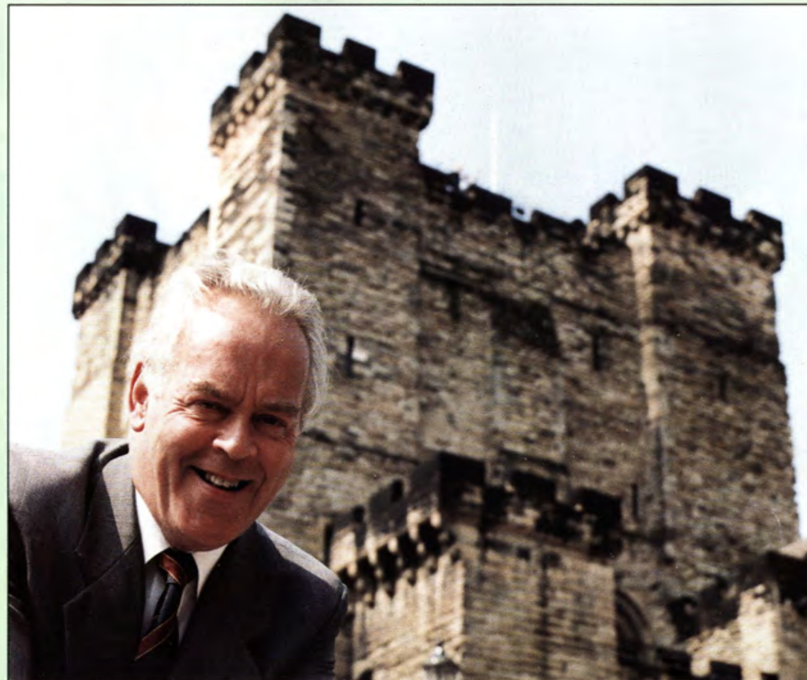
GUEST COLUMN

Still time, but only just



by Bill Midgley

The euphoria and many of the good intentions evident at the start of the new millennium have died down somewhat. Those major commitments to change that were around on 1 January 2000 now seem to have sunk back into obscurity, as most people revert to the normal pattern of life. We have seen a number of buildings erected as monuments to the millennium, attempts at personal or corporate gratification, not all entirely successfully. But what difference has the introduction of the millennium made to the way in which our society works together and tackles the real problems that face our communities? 'Not much' may be a fair answer.

The word 'inclusivity' is much used these days. There is hardly any government minister, local authority or quasi governmental organization which doesn't claim to tackle the problems of inclusivity. But does it happen? I question whether many who trot out this word really know what it means. To most it's something that has to be said—a 'buzz word'. Organizations seem to feel that if they use the vocabulary they are acknowledging their social responsibility.

Stand or fall together

Society in the United Kingdom remains alarmingly divided between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. The haves seems to be less and less willing to take any responsibility for helping the less well off in our communities. As those who gather ever more wealth seem to be more interested in spending that wealth and displaying the trappings that surround it, they spend ever less time on trying to understand why such a large part of our community is disadvantaged and perhaps no time at all in thinking whether they have any personal responsibility for this.

Communities stand or fall together, and society stands or falls together, and all must take responsibility for their own actions. The business community in particular has a responsibility to ensure that the wealth that it generates—and there is nothing wrong in the generation of wealth—is put to good use with a fairer distribution. Of course it needs to pay its employees and to pay them at the appropriate—but not obscene—level for labour that is worthy of its hire. And if that rate is expensive, then so be it.

However, such rich and powerful organizations should be putting more back into the community from which they generate their wealth. Statements to the effect that the creation of wealth is fulfilling that need are simply not enough. The despair that is seen in many innercity areas, the lack of hope because there will be no more employment, the situation which has created poor health, unacceptable levels of attainment in education and the resort to crime and drugs as a means of finding a way out are things that a 21st century civilization cannot and must not tolerate.

'We have to inspire our young people to believe that there is a future for them.'

Governments have their responsibilities, but we put governments in place. We have our own obligation to ensure that, whilst governments are delivering what we demand of them, we, the whole community, also understand the needs of society and contribute towards a solution.

Building an inclusive society will only be successful if that broad range of our community takes on board a personal commitment for what they can contribute. The ability of some to contribute may be small, but nevertheless the cumulative effect would be enormous.

A society which stands by and tolerates such a widening gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged will create social disorder at a level which, in our complacency, we always thought we would avoid in the UK. Indeed it is already happening in many of our inner-city areas as witnessed by some of the appalling crimes of late.

We have to inspire our young people in particular to believe that there is hope and a future for them as full members of our society. But it will be increasingly difficult to instil that view in those who over the past generation have been promised much but have received little.

It is more than promises that will be necessary. What is needed is real action creating real solutions, creating hope, developing trust, removing despair and ensuring that all our people work together. Perhaps that doesn't seem a radical proposition, but it is, because it simply doesn't happen.

Real debt to community

Those who feel they have salved their consciences by putting £10 into an envelope to their favourite charity over the Christmas period might just sit down and consider what their real debt is to that community of which they claim to be a part. Do they meet that obligation, or do they owe much more than they are prepared to admit? It is frustrating that government does not demand more of individuals and companies—not necessarily by higher taxation, which is the simple way out, but by constructive thinking on how each can play a greater part.

How all of us fulfil that responsibility is the true rent we must pay for our space on this earth.

A 21st century inclusive society is still a dream. In the words of Neville Shute in that harrowing film, *On the beach*, 'there is still time brothers'—but, in my opinion, only just.

Bill Midgley retired after 20 years with the Newcastle Building Society in 1998, having been CEO and Executive Vice Chairman. Among his present roles, he is Chairman of Durham County Cricket Club. He writes a regular column for 'The Journal', Newcastle upon Tyne.

NEXT ISSUE

Lead story: *For A Change* looks at the contribution of craftspeople to society.
Profile: Russian philosopher Grigory Pomerants

Healing history • Transforming relationships • Building community

FOR A CHANGE

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- Partnership in Nottingham
- Businessman in the community
- The power of one-to-one

Is there a place for us?

SPECIAL ISSUE ON TACKLING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

by David Jaquith in Oregon

Classic Peanuts

These comic strip icons of perennial childhood are forever age six and table high. In one episode, belligerent Lucy and mild mannered Linus get into an argument. Linus, tired of it, walks out. Lucy yells after him, 'Sure, that's right! Just walk out of the room!' Then for good measure she adds, 'You know what your trouble is? You can't take destructive criticism!'

Sounds suspiciously like the world you and I like to call reality.

Pros and cons

In politics, when discussions go high enough, and get serious enough, we call them 'talks'. Enter 'issues'. Whether it's at the dinner table or the conference table, talks can easily break down. We clam up, speak up, or do a Linus, and head for the door.

Why do talks break down? Poorly placed beliefs, maybe? Such as:

- by pointing out the sins of others I will have won the eternal blessing of heaven and the undying gratitude of my fellows;
- the truth of any matter can expand no further than my perceptions;
- since my logic is impeccable and my motives unassailable, I cannot possibly be wrong as to my conclusions;
- anyone who questions my methods is naïve, immoral or out to get me;
- if I shine a spotlight on your failures I'm adding to my stature. If you do the same to me, you're projecting.

A better question might be: why do seemingly unsolvable issues sometimes end up with everyone smiling? It could be that harmonious relationships are more likely to occur when all parties agree to weigh the pros and cons on the same scales.

Good to talk

Television talk shows. Call-in radio programmes. Email. Online chatrooms and discussion forums. Humanity's progeny is waking up and connecting with one another. Will we survive the shock? Yes, and be the better for it. As Martha Stewart, an icon of American do-it-yourself culture, sums everything up, 'It's a good thing.'

See you on Twosday

St Gregory was a fine fellow and no doubt did his best but his calendar has meant that since 1582 we've had to live with months of different lengths. Some months start on Sunday, while others begin on Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday. This has caused much confusion over critical things like pay periods, interest rates, golf dates and wedding anniversaries.

The *Phoenix New Times* reports on a new and far more user-friendly calendar made up of 13 months of 28 days. It's the brain child of the mathematician, Scott Flansburg, renowned for *I Count*—a programme for teaching children to enjoy numbers rather than fear them—and not least for his ability to compute columns of numbers faster in his head than can be done with a calculator.

His revolutionary 'Human Calendar' gives us Onesday, Twosday, Threesday, Foursday Fivesday, Sixthsday, Sevensday. Sorry, Sun, Moon, Thor, Saturn, et al. Win some, lose some.

All months will begin on Onesday and end on Sevensday, making every day of every month fall on the same day of the week. OK sharpies: 365 can't be evenly divided by 28. Fret not. All's well. The first month, dubbed 'zero' will contain a 'free day' known as '00'. Apparently we'll need that '00' day each year to get used to all that simplicity.

Net working for all

Anyone concerned for the planet's health and that of its inhabitants will find an impressive list of organizations and focus groups offering alternatives to limbo and disaster.

Such a group is OneWorld, a network of individuals and organizations working to bring about a world where resources are shared fairly and sustainably, where human rights are nurtured and protected, and where democratic governance structures enable people to shape their own lives.

Over 800 partner organizations cover a spectrum of development, environmental and human rights activities. They share information and ideas freely through OneWorld.net, a public interest portal dedicated to issues of global justice.

Yet another confirmation that those who care are not alone!

Come again?

In these high energy times of what my wife calls 'overlapping frenzies', a columnist for The *Salem Statesman Journal* (Oregon) comes out roundly for simplicity. He writes: 'There's no need to complicate things with a plethora of grandiloquent theories and hypothetical prognostications.' ■

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Cover: Towards an inclusive society
Photo: Tony Stone

Volume 14 No 1 February/March 2001

FOR A CHANGE

- closes the circle between faith and action, action and faith. It is for anyone, anywhere, who wants to make a difference to the world.

FOR A CHANGE believes

- that in a world torn by ancient hatreds, the wounds of history can be healed.
- that in the family and the workplace, relationships can be transformed.
- that in urban jungle or rural backwater, community can be built.
- that peace, justice and the survival of the planet depend on changes in attitudes as well as structures.

FOR A CHANGE

- draws its material from a wide range of sources and was born out of the experience of Moral Re-Armament.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The inclusive society must be global

This issue of *For A Change* is about the need to build a world where everyone has the chance to make the best of their talents.

In the developed world millions are excluded from the opportunities which their neighbours take for granted. They have little hope of fulfilling their dreams because they have no access to jobs or training, and do not have the necessary support structures around them. Some are the victims of racial prejudice or family deprivation, some of bad luck and others of psychological or physical affliction. Many, born on soulless housing estates where none of their relatives or friends can find jobs, have inherited a culture of hopelessness. But most could make much of their lives if the opportunities and support were there—as some of our articles suggest.

The poor in the developing world are often in an even more terrible situation: three quarters of the people in sub-Saharan Africa live on less than $2 a day. Their countries' budgets will not stretch to educating and equipping them, and there are relatively few individuals who can afford the time or money to help. Wealthy countries can play a part here through debt cancellation—though this by itself will not be enough.

Climate change, the subject of unsuccessful international talks before Christmas, is another problem that looks certain to knock the developing world disproportionately. In recent months Europe and Australia have suffered exceptional flooding that may well be due to global warming. But rising sea levels—resulting from expanding sea water and melting ice caps—threaten the very existence of some countries in Asia and the Pacific. The UK can afford to build the Thames flood barrier but how will the Maldives preserve her low-lying islands? Most of the so-called greenhouse gases are released by the rich world. We have a moral imperative to deal with this, as individuals and as countries. We may need to curb our lust for economic growth as well as our craving for car-travel. We need to give a higher priority to supporting efforts by developing countries to conserve their rain forests, which are vital to maintaining a healthy atmosphere, and to build their industrial development on clean technology.

It may seem a long way from the young man who spends his days hanging around a Peckham street corner to the trees being cut down by Brazilian subsistence farmers. But there is a common thread—the need for each of us to care for others in practical ways.

Kenneth Noble

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A NOTE ON MORAL RE-ARMAMENT

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

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

Steve Eason/ Hulton Getty

TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Philip Carr

Lawrence Fearon describes himself as a 'graduate of the streets'. He examines the issues behind social exclusion—and possible solutions.

Last November, 10-year-old Damilola Taylor was stabbed in the leg on his way home to a housing estate in Peckham, south London. He bled to death. Once again our society asks, 'Why? What has happened to us?'

The estate where Damilola died is one of western Europe's most deprived innercity areas, with high levels of unemployment, crime and violence. A recent government regeneration scheme (see box p6) has brought many improvements, but Taylor's death shows how far this regeneration—and British society as a whole—has to go.

Two years ago, Sir William Macpherson's inquiry into the brutal racial murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence highlighted the issue of 'institutional racism' in British society. This came as no surprise to those who have been labelled a minority in Britain. If you're Black or Asian in Britain, colour is one label you can't escape from.

At that time I was searching for an answer to the question, 'What is the hinge issue on which Britain's future swings?' It would not be unreasonable for members of Britain's ethnic minorities to feel that race is the hinge. But this may be too narrow, in a country where class, gender, religious and cultural differences are all issues to contend with.

The fact is that people are excluded for all sorts of reasons. Perhaps the hinge issue for Britain is not why people are excluded, but the culture of exclusion itself. What lies at its core? Could it be a motivation driven by a spirit of superiority and control, selfishness and indifference, greed and fear?

Some definitions of 'exclude' are 'shut out, reject, not consider, disentitle, banish'. Exclusion can cover lack of access to income, resources, the labour market, services and social relations. These are the issues which the residents of Peckham, and of many other similar neighbourhoods across Britain, have to contend with every day.

The issue of how to combat exclusion and create an inclusive society is one that I have been involved with for over 20 years. In the 1980s I was one of the founders of the Bridge Park project on the Stonebridge Estate in northwest London, one of the largest community projects in the UK. I went on to work for the UK Evangelical Alliance as a community initiatives consultant and now give all my time to MRA's Hope in the Cities UK initiative. Its mission is to help to develop inclusive communities and create trust-based relationships where all are valued and everyone is empowered to fulfil their potential.

I grew up close to the Stonebridge Estate which was notorious for its social problems. My parents came to Britain from the Caribbean in the late 1950s. They had struggles of their own: being transplanted into a new culture, cut off from close family ties, and having to cope with racial discrimination which excluded them from the mainstream of British society.

As a teenager, I was excluded from school, ran with the gangs and got into trouble with the police. Peer pressure was strong and the incentives to go straight were weak. It was at the age of 21 that a turning point came which led me to become a community activist. A fire at my flat, and a stretch in prison, made me feel that I wanted something different in life.

In the spring of 1981 a group of us co-founded the Harlesden Peoples Community Council (HPCC), at a time when the atmosphere in Britain's cities was highly charged. In April 1981, disturbances broke out on the streets of Brixton, south London. This was followed by a wave of rioting which engulfed 22 innercity areas around Britain, as the pressure caused by racial, social and economic exclusion erupted.

In this climate, the vision for Bridge Park was born. Against all the odds, we found the money and resources to convert a disused bus garage into an enterprising community complex, with sports and entertainment facilities, and 32 starter units for businesses. It was a drop in the ocean and illustrated both the vitality and problems associated with initiatives driven from the grass roots.

Our efforts were often frustrated by the cultural barriers within our local authority, and the policy swings that came with party-political changes in the borough council. And although, 20 years on, the rhetoric has changed considerably, the reality has not.

Public authorities often attempt to systemize the innovative approaches made by local people, so that they replicate institutional arrangements, rather than developing a culture of their own. Public sector employees assigned to develop these initiatives often show little commitment to understanding or supporting the upsurge of street-level activity needed. Demonstrating 'community involvement' can mean little more than demonstrating the assent of local people to the plans of the local authority.

Social entrepreneurs need all the encouragement they can get if we are to break the cycle of exclusion, deprivation and despair.

Some of this encouragement is coming from the national government. Prime Minister Tony Blair's first speech after he came to office in 1997 focussed on social exclusion. Since then the government has established a Social Exclusion Unit. In 1998 it launched a report on deprived neighbourhoods which set out a powerful analysis of what has gone wrong, and of the multi-faceted approach which was needed to

Philip Wolmuth/Panos

TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

address their problems.

Following on from the report, 18 Policy Action Teams (PATs) were set up, to develop the Government's policy response. The results of their consultations, *National strategy for neighbourhood renewal: a framework for consultation* (Cabinet Office, April 2000) were published last year.

Over the last 20 years, the *National strategy* states, poverty has become more concentrated in individual neighbourhoods and estates, and the social exclusion of these areas has increased. Many deprived areas have higher mortality rates than the rest of the country, and higher numbers of people with low skills and literacy. They have six times the level of unemployment and three times as many burglaries. This is not only a problem for their residents, but the waste of potential, and the spending on crime and benefits, holds back the prosperity of the country as a whole.

One of the Policy Action Teams found that the proportion of people from ethnic minorities living in Britain's 44 most deprived areas is four times higher than that in other areas. Four out of five Pakistani and Bangladeshi families live on incomes that are less than half the national average—as opposed to just over one in four white families. All in all, people from ethnic minorities are more likely to live in poor areas and in substandard housing, more likely to be jobless and to have low incomes, and more likely to have bad health and to suffer from crime.

'Mass unemployment and the closure of particular industries have devastated communities,' states the *National strategy*. 'New industries have required higher skills, and there has not been enough help for people to adjust to the changing jobs market. Many neighbourhoods have been left almost entirely dependent on state benefits and public money.' It paints a picture of overstretched public services, and of a flight from neighbourhoods whose reputations have been ruined by drugs, crime and youth unrest. 'Soon only those with no other option but to live in the area are left.'

The authors argue that the state response to the problem has often been thin and ineffective, relying on small-scale short-term regeneration programmes rather than addressing the 'chronic failure of mainstream policy'.

For a long time, deprivation tended to be seen as something which could be fixed with bricks and mortar. This missed important dimensions, they say, such as the need to help the unemployed to help themselves; the need to build trust so that people help each other rather than fear each other; the need for public services to be accountable to the community rather than simply to government; the importance of the private sec-

Doorstepping for jobs

Since 1989 Pecan (the Peckham Evangelical Churches Action Network) has trained over 7,000 people in one of south-east London's most deprived innercity areas. In 1992 the area had the highest rate of knifepoint robbery in the UK. Street robberies rose from 80 per month in 1992 to 200 a month in 1994, and unemployment soared.

Pecan recruited for its courses by sending volunteers to knock on doors on the 'no-go area' estates of Gloucester Grove and North Peckham. Thanks to their efforts—and to a major government regeneration scheme—unemployment in one ward has fallen from 26 per cent to 10 per cent in the last decade. Pecan was cited by the Bishop of Southwark on BBC Radio 4, in the aftermath of Damilola Taylor's killing, as one organization that was successfully addressing Peckham's problems.

In 1996, the government embarked on the £70 million regeneration scheme, which began to demolish the old estates and build new homes, nearly all with gardens. It enlisted Pecan to run the community induction project, visiting over 635 homes since October 1996.

I visited Pecan to interview its managing director, Simon Pellew.

Lawrence Fearon: What do you see as the root causes of exclusion?

Simon Pellew: I think it's a mixture of economic deprivation, very poor education, very poorly constructed and designed housing, and family break up. And I would say that family break up is a crucial part of the mix. I think they all feed into each other.

LF: What do you have to share from your own experience of addressing exclusion?

SP: Exclusion is a hard nut to crack and you've got to break in somewhere. We focussed on employment, one of the easier areas.

I'd love to know how to address the problem of family breakdown but I haven't got a clue how to, it's so deep into society. I don't know how you stop employers being racist. I think improving schools is difficult but the Government's doing it.

But there is something that smaller charities can do to help employment. We can provide people with the skills to get jobs, we can provide them with the training they need and to some extent we can also help them overcome some of aspects of racism as well.

LF: Why do you do what you do?

SP: I was brought up in Epsom, which is a very wealthy area. When I was about 18, I was travelling by train up to London and out of the window I could see all the tower blocks. I felt how much God hated these places for what they were doing to people. I had a sense that they were a real abomination, an appalling and destructive thing in people's lives. I've never had any other sense of calling but that sense, that these things were evil and pernicious. That is why I do the kind of work I do now.

I really believe God wants people to live in decent accommodation, to have decent jobs, to have good education and to live in families that aren't ripping themselves to pieces. Those things seem to be worth giving your life for.

LF: Has Pecan been an expression of what you wanted to achieve?

SP: We still work with some of the most needy people in the country, particularly refugees and people with mental illness. That's what I think Pecan should be about.

One thing we at Pecan do differently is that everyone is paid the same. Partly that's to reject the market value approach to people, to say that you're worth far more than what you're paid.

LF: How has the involvement of different sectors helped in building a more inclusive community?

SP: In the 12 years that we've been working in Peckham, crime has fallen, unemployment has massively fallen, many of the atrocious housing estates have been demolished and education is improving.

This is partly down to a holistic approach: private companies have built houses, the local council has done a lot of work, charities including ourselves have been involved, the police have got their act together, and the faith communities have been involved.

It shows that cities can be transformed but it's expensive and hard long-term work.

LF: Could Peckham be an example to other parts of the country in terms of different groups working together in partnership?

SP: Yes! Although I'm reluctant to use the term partnership. I think partnership should be restricted to peers working together.

Partnership is attractive if you make it work but it's very time consuming, very expensive, and usually government programmes can't wait that long. What the council usually means by partnership is a consultation exercise. A real partnership is where they give up their power and in my experience that doesn't happen often.

Pecan can be contacted at 1-3 Atwell Rd, London SE15 4TW.
Email: welcome@pecan.org.uk

On the doorstep with Pecan

Gateway to the City

Spitalfields, in East London, lies just outside the square mile of the City, Britain's financial centre. While the City is perhaps the greatest wealth creator in Europe, nearly a third of Spitalfields' residents are unemployed. Eighty-three per cent of the population are Bengali, and 47 per cent of these are without jobs.

The City Gateway Initiative, founded by Dirk Paterson in October 1999, aims to build a bridge between these two areas and train and empower Spitalfields residents for IT jobs in the City. They target 18- to 25-year-olds, mainly from the Bangladeshi community, and aim to equip them with leading-edge skills. Their courses also address the cultural barriers and prejudices that often hinder entry into City jobs. Of the 24 people who have completed their courses so far, eight have gone on to fulltime university education and nine are in jobs.

Lawrence Fearon: What has been your work's focus?

Dirk Paterson: My vision has been to start some kind of mechanism by which the Bengali community, who have been excluded, could be included in the society of the rich. I believe the City needs its gates thrown open.

People who live on the edge of the City of London have this incredible feeling of rich and poor. There are people on one side of Brick Lane earning £1 million pounds as their Christmas bonus. While on the other side of Brick Lane there are seven people living in two rooms.

There is a feeling that this is utterly unjust. So we had a God-given vision of creating a way into the richness of the City for those excluded from it. Hence the City Gateway initiative.

LF: What would you say is at the root of exclusion?

DP: There are lots of reasons why people are excluded. One is, I think, that this City is basically racist, and another is that there is a perception that Bengali people don't have the right accents, the right skills and the right attitudes.

LF: How are you addressing the issue?

DP: We have set up an Information Technology Training Company limited by guarantee, a charity. The vision is not only to give people IT skills but also to encourage them spiritually. There are some 150,000 IT vacancies in the City, so it makes sense to link the skills deficit and the local unemployment—it's a simple win-win scenario.

As well as IT skills we wanted to give people confidence they've never had, because many have never had the kind of education that people like myself and people in the City have had. Many of them have parents who are second generation non-English speakers.

We want to give local young Bengali people the encouragement that they've never had because they were not expected to achieve more than two GCSE's in their school-leaving exams, or to do anything but muck around. Our vision is to give them the equipment to be included in the City.

LF: How have you given expression to your vision through Gateway?

DP: We produce a holistic package for the young people who come on our 14-week courses. People are allocated to a mentor at the very beginning, who will check on how the course is going, give guidance on choices that need to be made, check on whether the student is studying well outside the course and turning up on time and all those sorts of things which students often miss out on.

As believers, we bring a specific spiritual dimension to the work, and underpin all we do with prayer.

At the time of going to press, City Gateway is looking for a Deputy Manager, and would also welcome offers of mentoring, work placements or donations. Further information from City Gateway Ltd, Bethnal Green Training Centre, Deal Street, London E1.
Email: dpaterson@londonchamber.co.uk

Training in leading-edge skills for the City

TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

tor; and the need for services to work together, and for the community itself to be included in the process.

The *National strategy* concludes that there are four imperatives for successful regeneration:

- to revive the economy
- to empower the community
- to improve key public services—especially schools, health and the police—and to re-engage private services
- to find ways of joint working, which put the deprived communities 'in the driving seat' and ensure that all local authorities and service providers play their part.

In recent years a start has been made in tackling many of the causes of social exclusion. But more is needed.

Why, for instance, does social exclusion affect people from ethnic minorities more than the white community? The PAT study cited above points out that the problems of ethnic minorities are exacerbated by racial discrimination, by a failure to understand the complexities of their situation and therefore to tailor services to their needs, and by language, cultural and religious differences.

When you have a society which has at its core unhealed history, fear, superiority, dominance and a structure of governance whose instinct is to plaster over deep wounds, the outcome over time can be devastating.

Denial, anger and rhetoric make up the downward slope towards the pit of despair. The process of bringing about lasting change will require a lifelong commitment. The only way up is acknowledgement, acceptance and taking responsibility.

What is needed, I believe, is for programmes to involve the people they aim to assist more directly in decision-making and the delivery of services. This will require radical innovation in all sectors. Significant power and resources must be given directly to communities. Their capacity for entrepreneurship and self-reliance can only be developed by ending the dominance and inflexibility of the public sector. Policymakers and public officials will have to be more ready to take risks and learn from practice.

Dick Atkinson, a pioneer of community-based regeneration in Balsall Heath, Birmingham, stressed the need for 'local authorities doing less themselves and enabling people in neighbourhoods to do more'. He outlines three imperatives his new book, *Urban Renaissance* (Brewin Books, 2000):

- to give communities a lead in neighbourhood renewal
- to make better use of public resources so that they liberate rather than trap people
- to connect communities to wider economic opportunities so they share in growth and prosperity.

In the past, there has been a tendency to see people as representatives of structures. Instead we need to invest in the capacity of real people to achieve long-term social results. A holistic approach is essential—encompassing health, housing, schools, safety and the environment, all areas of life where individuals, families and neighbourhoods have a crucial role.

I have been greatly encouraged by the people I interviewed while preparing this article (see boxes, p6 and p7). They are people of faith who have used their gifts to tackle aspects of social exclusion, often in very difficult circumstances. They have welcomed people rather than excluded them, and have helped to put understanding in the place of fear. In so doing, they have begun to lay the foundations of an inclusive society.

'My vision of Britain is of a nation where no one is left out or left behind, and where power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few,' maintains Tony Blair. 'Investing in that vision is an investment in the future of our whole country, and is in everyone's interest.' The challenge, I believe, is not just to government and business, but to every one of us. ■

Karen Elliott Greisdorf examines the role of mentoring in youth and job-training programmes in the USA.

The preventive medicine of one-to-one

A familiar proverb reads 'Give a man a fish, he'll eat for a day. Teach him to fish and he'll eat for a lifetime.'

This approach is particularly alive in the mentoring movement in the United States. With roots in the 19th century, these empowerment programmes gained new life in the mid-1980s, according to Shayne Schneider, President of Mentors Unlimited. The programmes matched largely middle-class adults with low-income innercity youth in a relationship of support and nurturing.

Schneider attributes the impetus to several converging factors, which include: the business community's need to develop the workforce; donors' and volunteers' sense of social responsibility; a mood in society that began to favour individual efforts over government programmes as a response to social problems; a growing desire among successful professionals for more meaningful interaction in their lives; and a lessening of racial tension and fear, which enabled multicultural programmes to take hold.

Schneider, a former teacher, is the founder of Mentors, Inc, a not-for-profit organization which matches adults with high school youth. She defines a mentoring relationship as one 'where the mentor acts as a trusted advisor and friend and in its fullest form encompasses the three a's of advice, access and advocacy'. With a blossoming of programmes, Schneider has seen the movement become more 'sophisticated and realistic'.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, she remembers, mentoring was 'touted as a cheap fix for society's ills'. Today organizations, such as The National Mentoring Partnership (www.mentoring.org), are collecting information on 'best practices', rather than simply focussing on how to get more people into programmes. One element of Schneider's consulting work is to 'move the direction of thinking toward viewing mentoring as a way to build on the protégé's innate strengths and gifts, rather than to prevent disasters from befalling "at-risk" youth'. She also stresses the need to acknowledge 'the value (in terms of personal emotional growth) for the mentor as an important component of programme success'.

Evidence that mentoring programmes can positively affect young people is now available from the national nonprofit organization Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) (www.ppv.org). They conducted an eight year study of the US's most widely known mentoring programme, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA), which currently maintains 75,000 active matches between volunteer adults and youngsters. P/PV's study found that participants in BBBS programmes were less likely to start using drugs and alcohol and less likely to hit someone, and that their school attendance and performance, attitudes toward completing schoolwork and peer and family relationships all improved. The study is clear, however, that these benefits didn't take hold overnight, but are the result of 'specialized local programmes that adhere to well-developed quality standards'.

While Big Brothers Big Sisters and other mentoring programmes throughout the country are helping to support and nurture thousands of children and teens, the need for additional opportunities, such as job training and employment, remains great. One response from the federal government has been Youthbuild, a programme which helps 16- to 24-year-olds to work their way out of poverty by training them as construction workers while building and renovating low-income housing. 'This programme gives new hope to high school dropouts, enabling them to build housing for families in need while building new careers and new lives for themselves,' the Secretary of the US Department of Housing and Development (HUD), Andrew Cuomo said in September 2000 (www.hud.gov).

Youthbuild is an example of the federal government providing training. Other efforts, designed at the local level, are also contributing to a renaissance in the workforce and society. One example is DadsWork, a programme in Richmond, Virginia, dedicated to job preparation, placement and maintenance for men of colour who are fathers.

'In terms of getting the "disenfranchised" back to work, it goes further than simply getting a job,' says Charles Price, Executive Director of DadsWork. 'It means that the father will feel better about himself when he acquires and maintains employment, is able to support himself, assume or resume financial support, in part, or totally, for his children, and that, by working, he will be modelling an extremely important behaviour for his children.'

For such a programme to be successful, there needs to be a commitment from the participants (88 per cent of the fathers have completed job readiness training) as well as the community as a whole. While DadsWork is a project of Hope in the Cities (www.hopeinthecities.org), it works in partnership with East District Families First Initiative, Virginia Commonwealth University AmeriCorps Program, Richmond Career Advancement Center, Richmond Community Action Program, Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority and the Better Housing Coalition.

Brian Friel

Metasebia Fekadu, a legal assistant at Swidler Berlin Shereff Friedman, with fourth-grader Richard Carter

While mentoring is most common in programmes for children and youth, job-training programmes such as DadsWork make use of it. Another programme which offers personal support for its clients is Suited For Change (SFC) (www.suitedforchange.org) in Washington, DC. SFC provides professional clothing and ongoing career education to low-income women to increase their chances of getting and keeping jobs and thus gaining economic independence. Mentoring occurs during professional development seminars and one-on-one client appointments. 'I like watching the differences between clients and volunteers fall away at these moments,' says Executive Director Karina Halvorsen. 'In the end, it is simply women helping women.'

In the Nineties, as studies showed that more women and people from minorities would be entering the workforce in the year 2000 and beyond, companies began to develop specific strategies to address their needs. As early as 1991, Robyn DeWees, an engineer with a global technology company, participated in a study that focussed on the advancement of minorities in the fields of computer science and engineering. She feels that there are still not enough hands-on programmes working toward bridging the digital divide.

'We need to have more computer and software manufacturers and IT companies committing time, products and personnel resources,' DeWees says. But her chief concern is with the training of tomorrow's workforce. 'Students who don't have computer access don't develop the same level of interest and also develop a lack of comfort with technology. They don't know how to use the internet as a tool. With the shortage of people with experience to fill the IT jobs, this technology gap has the potential to impact individuals, corporations, and the economy.'

Investment in mentoring and job training programmes can be staggering: one mentor-mentee match of Big Brothers Big Sisters costs roughly $1,000. Public/Private Ventures reported in its study that it is 'extremely unlikely that significant expansion could be accomplished entirely with private funds. Public funding also seems unlikely at this time, when budgets for social programmes are being drastically cut at the federal level and social policy interventions are widely viewed by the public as ineffective.'

Shayne Schneider reports that there is a growing recognition that faith-based programmes offer great value to the community. But, she says, 'There is still a tremendous, and probably healthy, resistance to government funding for such programmes. As a society, we value the separation of church and state, and we understand intuitively the risks we run when tax dollars go to church programmes.' She is beginning to see a new trend of establishing spiritually-based programmes without formal church connections, so that they can become eligible for government, as well as private, funding.

Brian Friel, a Washington DC lawyer who used to teach at a high school in South Central Los Angeles, says more money doesn't always equate with better results. Under his leadership, the law firm of Swidler Berlin Shereff Friedman has sponsored a programme in a local elementary school, which involves up to 60 employees. With a relatively small outlay of cash, it has given both professional and administrative staff time off to visit the school once a week and provided a shuttle bus to get them there. They go to give academic support, but Friel feels their greatest impact is in simply showing up.

'Our schools are under complete assault and there is a huge need for companies and other firms to share not only resources but people—and that doesn't just include their professional staff,' Friel says. 'It is a question of giving back to the community in which we work.'

Whether through 'teaching someone to fish' or a sense of giving back to the community, the relationships developed by mentoring and job training programmes strengthen the health of the whole nation. The opening words of the Public/Private Ventures study sum up what is needed to practise preventive social medicine in the United States: 'Individual change and progress is fundamentally about having other individuals care, support, tend to and guide on a one-to-one basis. There is no substitute.' ■

PEOPLE

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Edited by Anastasia Stepanova

Paul George introduces Jester Minute to captivated children in Kosova in 1999.

Magicaid

Near the beautiful city of Canterbury lives a self-taught entertainer who spreads joy and happiness far beyond the British Isles. Paul George travels to crisis areas overseas with his show 'Fred Bear and the Magic Mice' bringing magic and wonder to the lives of children.

After 17 years' experience running his own rural educational centre to bring inner city children into the country-side, George decided to follow a lifetime dream of becoming a fulltime entertainer. As Jester Minute, he has become a popular act for corporate parties.

In May 1999 he joined the British humanitarian aid Convoy of Hope (see *FAC* January/February 1993), based in Canterbury, to visit refugee camps in Macedonia. It was a life-threatening trip with missiles firing over the ferry they were on, frightening explosions in neighbouring Kosovo and finally being held up by the local Mafia and then released in exchange for medical aid. Yet this didn't stop George from going several times to Kosovo that year and performing Jester Minute ankle-deep in mud and soaked to the skin by rain. Needless to say all these trips were accompanied by difficulties with local authorities as well as technical problems and living-on-wheels inconveniences.

In January 2000, George was invited by British Aid for Deprived Children to entertain the children of Chernobyl over Orthodox Christmas. Now he had to face the bureaucratic routine of stamped papers, constant customs checks leading to the confiscation of pens, toiletries, clothing and chocolates 'for analysis', and unauthorized police fines on the roads. None of this stopped him. George gave four days of non-stop magic shows in sanatoriums and clinics.

Struck by the poverty and living conditions of the badly contaminated children, he decided to return to the Zelenei Gei Recuperation Sanatorium with more aid. 'Many of the children have very little apart from their illness,' says George. 'Two small boys about six years of age and quite inseparable helped me in a magic show. Their prize was a Matchbox diecast car each. You would think I'd given them Fort Knox.'

He managed to take a ton of paint, several rolls of carpet, games and equipment for a non-existent games-room, and even vitamins, bedding and medical supplies—all thanks to the generosity of his local community in Kent. 'It's amazing how responsive people can be,' says George. 'The aid pops up from where you don't expect it.'

It's not at all easy to spend half of your time on earning money as a medieval jester and magician and another half on tiring trips overseas. He could have been enjoying a peaceful family life. He is lucky that his wife Gill and two grown-up children are supportive and sometimes even join his trips.

Now Paul George is preparing for his next trip to Chernobyl this spring. He was planning to go there for Orthodox Christmas but realized there was not enough time to raise the money and find the necessary supplies. Nevertheless, Paul and Gill decided to send Christmas gifts to the 103 staff working at the sanatorium—a $5 note in each greeting card, which is big money in the Ukraine. Now that, they will say, is magic.

Anastasia Stepanova

Cement for community

Pierre Semaan, Commercial Director of a large cement factory in Albania, believes in investment in his workforce as well as in plant and materials. 'It's not just about paying salaries, but also about developing people,' he says.

When Seament Albania's factory in Elbasan was forced to close for eight months during the anarchy of 1977, the management decided to keep faith with the workforce by continuing to pay their salaries, even though there was no production. And when, in 1999, Kosovar refugees were streaming into Albania, the company seconded six employees to look after 125 refugees throughout the period of the Kosovo war.

In the town the company runs an English school which currently has 80 pupils in the first year and 42 in the second year. In addition to this, Semaan says, 48 of their workers have been sent on six-week computer courses to upgrade their personal skills. In cooperation with the Red Cross, the company is running a series of four-day first aid workshops. So far 54 have attended in groups of six.

Local sponsorships during 2000 included sporting activities, art exhibitions, cleaning projects with schools, renovation of a main hall for the University of Elbasan, underwriting a tour to Italy of 26 students from the School of Nursing and providing prizes and gifts for two underprivileged kindergartens.

The company has embarked on a programme to clean up the nearby river, which will prevent erosion of the roads that run beside it. It has also opened new roads into isolated villages near two quarries that supply the factory.

But perhaps even more important to local people is employment. To create as many jobs as possible, Seament Albania decided on a policy of establishing separate units to provide some of the things the factory uses. Seven people are employed in a sewing factory to make overalls. Six assemble wheelbarrows, eight more produce wooden pallets while 35 are employed at a paper bag factory, which produces 500,000 cement bags per month.

Paul Williams

Inside Influence

An exhibition, entitled 'Inside Influence', was held last December at the University of Greenwich's Stephen Lawrence Gallery, featuring Vanilla Beer's abstract works. The exhibition focusses on the connection between the everyday and the transcendental.

Vanilla Beer is a professional artist who graduated in theology from the University of Greenwich as a mature student. She is particularly interested in spirituality in art. 'I feel that art and what is loosely termed spirituality have a relationship which has not been properly explored,' she says. Although her works are considered to be abstract, she takes her inspiration from local life in Woolwich, south-east London, where she has lived since 1986. Pigeons often feature in her works representing street life.

She believes that today's materialistic world makes it hard to reach the spiritual side of life. Many young people turn to drugs and alcohol in search of it. 'Through art people can achieve spiritual awareness much more quickly and healthily,' she says.

Vanilla Beer has always been active in the community wherever she has lived. Some years ago, when she lived in Gloucester, she helped to establish a centre for the unemployed in the Forest of Dean and ran fund-raising projects for the local community. As Honorary Secretary of the Printmakers Council in the early 1980s she worked with various artists' groups mostly in south-east London organizing exhibitions and giving art workshops.

When she moved to Woolwich she developed a strong connection with the community. 'As a local artist I have a relationship with the community that has taken the form of being an arts activist,' she says.

Vanilla Beer co-founded the Woolwich Arts Group (WAG), instigated and coordinated the Genderquake exhibition of local women artists, and worked with Gallery 87, collaborating with Greenwich Festival to train emerging artists.

She has been involved in social life not only on the local community level, but also on the international one. She is trained as a facilitator in syntegration, a non-hierarchical process for decision-making. In this capacity she has taken part in a Swiss bank's funding of charitable projects in South Africa and set up the World Citizenry conference at the University of Greenwich which, she says, was the first ever real-time global conference on the Internet.

Now Vanilla Beer is a coordinator of local artists' exhibitions and reviewer of art books, focussing particularly on spirituality, as well as a guest lecturer at the University of Greenwich.

Anastasia Stepanova

Vanilla Beer, artist and community activist, uses the pigeon as a symbol of city life.

PROFILE

Paul Nouwen took a very different path from his famous brother, the devotional writer Henri Nouwen. But they share more than just their roots, discovers Hennie de Pous-de Jonge.

Adding value for motorists and the unemployed

Paul Nouwen is well-known in The Netherlands. For 13 years his name was synonymous with the country's largest motorists' organization Koninklijke ANWB (the Royal Dutch Touring Club) with 3.6 million members.

Even though he has retired from the ANWB, Nouwen's name or photograph keep popping up in the media. During the Olympic Games in Sydney there was a meeting to consider whether the games should one day come to The Netherlands. It was chaired by Paul Nouwen. In 2001 Rotterdam is the Cultural Capital of Europe—Paul Nouwen is chairman of the foundation that is coordinating this event.

He is still much in demand but he does not accept every invitation. Taking his time and health into consideration, he also weighs the added value of his participation and the purpose of the undertaking.

One of his 20-plus public appointments is chairman of the working group for 'Business in the Community' (BIC) in The Hague. This group aims to improve social and community relations through better teamwork between government, business and the social services.

The Mayor of The Hague, Wim Deetman, launched BIC in 1998 to tackle social problems in the city, especially high youth unemployment among the immigrant communities. It is modelled on the British programme of the same name.

In a modern office complex near Rotterdam Central Station, where he has based since his retirement, Nouwen explains what 'doing business in the community' means. It is not the same as socially orientated entrepreneurship which has a charitable sound to it. All participants win. The parties involved (government, business and the social services) all gain from an improved social climate. Similarly, the cooperation between business and schools results in a win-win situation. A large publishing firm of daily newspapers and a vocational training school are jointly developing job opportunities for graphic artists who have had little schooling. Similarly the College for Transport and Logistics is working with The Hague Public Transport Corporation.

In such ways countless connections have been made in the last two years between schools, colleges, businesses and local government, with the specific purpose of giving immigrants, handicapped people and ex-criminals the hope of a job. Businessmen and civil servants occasionally teach at schools. And young people gain work experience through internships.

Nouwen does not ask for financial support from the 20 companies who take part in the project but looks for practical and personal involvement. It is too early to talk about results, Nouwen says. He sees it as his task to inspire the working group, find new projects and continue to interest new people.

'Leadership is to inspire' is his experience. 'You could say our work is creating small-scale examples. I must remain enthused, and keep up people's spirits.' For it is not all plain sailing. A removal firm made a date with seven young people. Not one of them turned up on the day.

Nouwen finds a spiritual dimension in this work which is not only added value for himself, but for all participants. People experience the satisfaction of doing something without being focused on profits.

Paul Nouwen compares this work with that of his elder brother, Henri, who died a few years ago. Henri gave up his successful scholarly career to live and work in one of the homes of L'Arche, where handicapped and non-handicapped people form a community together. These homes are also 'small-scale examples'. They show a different kind of community.

Not long before his sudden death, Henri Nouwen, a Roman Catholic priest and author of 40 contemplative books, wrote a book whose Dutch title translates as 'Finally Home' (published in English as *The return of the prodigal son*), with thoughts about Rembrandt's painting of the same name. 'His best book,' says Paul Nouwen, 'because one can so easily identify with what he writes.' In the book the writer puts himself in the position of first the younger son, then the older son and finally the father.

Paul Nouwen identifies with what his brother expresses in the book. 'Sometimes I feel like a father—although not so often, as I have no children. More often I feel like the prodigal son (the lost son, in Dutch) because things don't quite work out the way you hope. But sometimes I can feel like the jealous older son. My brother's book is called "Finally home". What does "finally" mean? What is our final home? To be with God? That is what it was for my mother and also for Henri. On his way to Russia to work on the filming of his book (Rembrandt's painting hangs in the Hermitage in St Petersburg) Henri suddenly died. He was "finally home". But "finally home" can also mean discovering your calling or having peace in your heart.'

> **'Our work is creating small-scale examples'**

Reaching retirement age meant a big adjustment for Paul Nouwen. 'After 40 years of earning a salary you find yourself sitting alone in an office. It takes some getting used to not to be in the spotlight. I now have to buy my own tickets when I want to go somewhere. But it is not that bad—you get confronted with yourself again!'

After his departure from the ANWB he also had to resign as the World President of the AIT, the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme in Geneva, of which all automobile and tourist clubs are members. His farewell took place during the October 1999 meeting in Seville, Spain. He gave a speech, and the 400 people present from around the world applauded. He was made an honorary member and received a decoration. 'But you soon notice that life goes on without you,' says Nouwen. 'I hear people talking about a problem about which I know a great deal, but I am no longer consulted. Or you see people doing things with which you do not agree, but you cannot interfere. Then you need to learn to be the contented son and not the jealous son.'

The ANWB grew enormously under Nouwen's leadership. He listened to the members, spoke with the staff and went out with the rescue service cars. He believed that everyone's contribution was needed and important.

His style of leadership and his way of inspiring others makes one want to know more about his background.

Paul Nouwen comes from a typical Catholic family from the south of the country. His father was a 'self-made' man, sincere and strict, who knew his own mind in regard to both the Church and life in general. His mother was a woman of faith and prayer. The social conscience that is typical of him and the other Nouwens, has its roots in his upbringing. Not money, but how your life could benefit people, was the ultimate good.

As a child Paul wanted to do something with animals, but his father said: 'Why not be normal!' So he studied law in Leiden. Later his father came with a further suggestion. 'You are not cut out for the legal profession. You are more a people person. Why not go to a large company?' So he joined Nationale Nederlanden, a large insurance firm, where he worked for 27 years, becoming the head of its Life Insurance Company at the age of 32. In 1987 he became the President of the ANWB.

Nouwen does not agree with those who sometimes labelled him a car lobby man. 'Yes, the ANWB and I were for improving mobility, but in an environmentally friendly way. We were against tollgates and electronic payment because we did not believe this was the way to reduce car use. We live in a growing economy. People don't let themselves be governed by tollgates. Those extra costs will in the end be borne by the employer. What does work is making more money available for public transport and alternatives to the car.'

The fact that a plan for universal electronic tollgates in The Netherlands has been scaled down to an experiment in the three largest cities is partly due to the ANWB. And those cities only agreed to the plan in exchange for a huge investment in their infrastructure.

'The ANWB is not a car lobby,' he stresses, 'but a service provider for the motorist in need, the cyclist and the Dutch tourist abroad. We are for the improvement of rail transport and for better facilities for handicapped people travelling by train.'

When asked which people or events have influenced him most, he says without hesitation, 'Being in the presence of death. It shows how vulnerable we are and that we must make good use of our time. I see life more as a gift than as something I control.'

Eight years ago his wife Marina San Giorgi died after five years' illness. Nouwen has collected the poems she wrote during that time in a booklet entitled *Een glimlach kwam voorbij* (A smile passed by). These beautiful, sensitive and honest poems help him to live life with a positive spirit. ■

Nottingham tackles 'hinge issue' for Britain

'Honest conversation' at Nottingham's Partnership Council is a key to urban renewal, **Michael Smith** discovers:

Nottingham citizens enjoyed the symbolism recently in inviting Haven Roosevelt, grandson of former American President Franklin D Roosevelt, to open a converted textile factory in the innercity area of Radford. It will be used for new businesses and development services to the community.

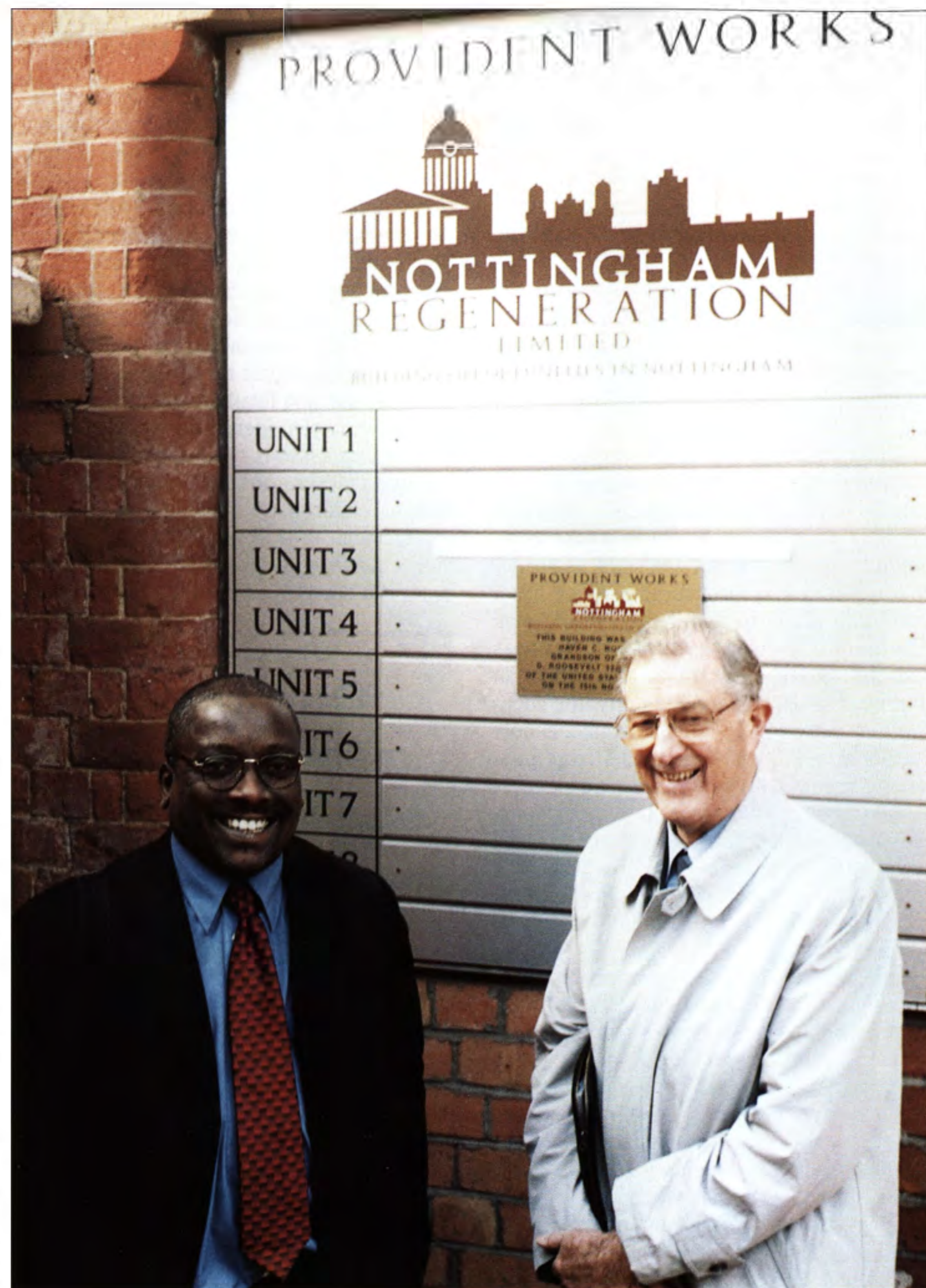
FD's New Deal programme of public works helped to lift America out of the Great Depression of the 1930s. In Britain, the government's New Deal for Communities 'laser targets' rundown neighbourhoods. The investment in Nottingham's Radford and Hyson Green districts is £55 million—a huge sum for an area of 4,000 households, and some think it should be spread wider.

They compare it with the £5.4 million of European Community URBAN funding, which is being channelled into four of Nottingham's deprived innercity neighbourhoods—Forest Field, New Basford, Radford and Hyson Green—through the area's Partnership Council (PC).

Ironically, this smaller regeneration sum, which has to be 'match funded' by the same amount from local sources, seems to be creating the greater excitement because of the way the PC involves local citizens in decision-making.

On the surface, Nottingham is a great place to live. It claims to be one of Britain's five most prosperous cities, with enough job vacancies to cater for all the unemployed. The lace industry, on which Nottingham built its wealth during the industrial revolution, has long since been superseded as the primary employer. The Boots pharmacy and Paul Smith fashion chains are based here; there are Carlton Television studios and leading quality printing companies.

But like all major cities, there are also pockets of acute deprivation. In rundown neighbourhoods unemployment among the ethnic minorities is nearly 25 per cent. Burglary and car crime—often drug related—run at twice the national average. And the city has some of the nation's worst performing schools.



Michael Henry (left), Chief Executive of Build, and Richard Hawthorne, Chairman of Nottingham's Partnership Council

How to engage the alienated and socially excluded in a programme of urban renewal? 'The one-size-fits-all and the we-know-best approach of the local government authority was not working,' says city councillor John Taylor, who is Chairman of Nottingham Health Authority. 'We were doing it all the wrong way. Everything was top down, imposed and property focussed, rather than home grown. We had to look at regeneration differently.' There was a need, says Taylor, for a level of devolved local decision-making below local government—'you might call it an urban parallel council'.

To fill this need, the Partnership Council came to birth four years ago as an independent limited company, after consultation with some 900 households. The emphasis is on 'honest conversation in order to improve service delivery', says printing company director and PC chairman Richard Hawthorne. At the heart of the PC are seven forums: three for residents and one each for the business, voluntary, public and local government sectors. Three representatives from each make joint decisions at the PC's monthly board meetings.

Their action plans are beginning to be felt in the community. Build, a mentoring programme for black teenagers, occupies the top floor of the renovated building which Roosevelt opened. Half a dozen state-of-the-art computers, with video editing, give the teenagers a chance to learn IT skills. A staff of 14, supported by some 80 volunteer mentors, helped 300 kids last year and the numbers are rising. Build's Chief Executive, Michael Henry, says that this has helped several to go on to higher education.

Build's successful delivery of the PC's Cross Cultural Networks project persuaded the Home Office to award Build with a £182,000 'Converting Communities' grant, to extend the project throughout the city. Henry says, 'There is huge potential in bringing together groups as diverse as Polish, Ukrainian, Italian, Vietnamese, Asian and Black communities, to talk about their good or bad experiences and thus be empowered to suggest what is right for their communities.' Henry himself is so committed to the task that he turned down a private sector job, which would have doubled his salary.

But his relationship with the PC hasn't always been plain sailing. At one point in discussions, frustration boiled over and Henry began to walk out. At that moment Hawthorne spoke about the need for 'honest conversation'. Henry found the phrase so rivetting it stopped him in his tracks and he stayed.

The emphasis on grassroots empowerment is at the heart of the PC and its greatest success is in 'delivering a local agenda', says PC Coordinator Christina Ashworth. She singles out action to tackle street crime. Residents wanted to go beyond 'more bars, more locks, more lights, to diversionary activities for young people'. Youth clubs run in forbidding old school buildings were not attracting teenagers off the streets. But asking them what they wanted led to a summer sports programme in their neighbourhoods, with plenty of equipment provided.

Residents also called for 'restorative justice', which takes young offenders to meet their victims and make reparations—a salutary experience when they see the harm they have done, and a strong disincentive against future crime. Residents were not just looking for a change in infrastructure, Ashworth points out. 'They were saying these are our kids or our neighbours' kids. It is a different view when you live in a place than living outside and providing services to it.'

Sociology graduate Sarah Smith, a PC projects worker, says that the 'most significant' initiative is an employment link for ex-offenders. This has had over 100 referrals from the Probation Service and NACRO (National Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders). Young people with criminal records are linked with employers willing to take them on. So far 60 have found jobs. 'The numbers of people involved don't tell you what you have achieved,' Smith says. 'It is how people in the community feel that matters.'

Tackling social exclusion is 'the hinge issue for Britain', says Adrian Dewhurst, who coordinates the PC's Business Forum involving some 200 local businesses. Business people, he urges, have a crucial role to play. They are attracted initially to the Business Forum by the benefits they see accruing to them, such as Retail Renaissance, a £2.3 million programme of redeveloping retail properties through the EU's URBAN fund. 'But then you get them to think of the wider community, how to make the place safer to live in,' Dewhurst says. 'You start to touch on their conscience—not just what you get out of it but what you put into the wider community.'

Nigel Skill, for instance, runs a family motor coach business with a fleet of 50 coaches. He was concerned to find that his 250 employees did not reflect the cultural diversity of Radford, where the company is based. Only five per cent lived within a five mile radius of the company's headquarters. This has increased to 10 per cent since Skill began to recruit from the unemployed and the 'third age'. But now his company has expanded and plans to leave Radford and this will create a hole, says Dewhurst. Its site will be turned into much needed urban housing.

Hawthornes Printers and Skills are both cited by Britain's Institute of Public Policy Research as a good examples of 'corporate social engagement'*, the government's new catch-phrase for business commitment to social inclusion. As part of its social engagement, Hawthornes donates pallets of paper to local schools, welcomes classes to visit the plant and provides work experience for eight schools and colleges. Even so, Richard Hawthorne admits that too few of the firm's 90 employees come from the inner city.

A formative moment in his life came in London in the late 1960s when he met a travelling group from India with its theatre production, *India Arise*, produced by Moral Re-Armament. One particular song, *Will we have rice tomorrow, Dad?*, made a deep impression on him.

Sitting in his car on the Thames Embankment the next morning, he felt an inner call, to 'open my heart to people whom I had kept at arms length and to newcomers to Britain who were treated as second-class citizens'. As a Christian, he felt he was being urged to 'the biggest task that God was asking of me and not to restrict myself to things I felt I could undertake without making a fool of myself.' As a result, he has been a member, since 1970, of what is now Nottingham's Racial Equality Council.

'I have been struck by the need to heal the hurts of history and to think for those who have become socially excluded,' Hawthorne says. 'Our Creator has a plan for our cities. The challenge is to live so that we discover it individually and implement it together. This is the answer to the control and fear which stifles so much teamwork and creative regeneration.' He urges that the 'honest conversation' must continue between the Partnership Council and local residents, especially where there are continuing feelings of exclusion.

For Christina Ashworth, the bottom line is not 'the outputs, bar charts, buildings and services' so much as doing things 'in a way that enhances people's dignity and makes them feel included and respected'. She would like the government, which published its *National strategy for neighbourhood renewal* last year, to take a close look at Nottingham's experience. She thinks they would have a thing or two to learn. ■

**'A welcome engagement' by Ella Joseph, published by the Institute of Public Policy Research, £8.95, ISBN 1 86030 108 8.*

The Partnership Council Children's Forum involves young children in innercity regeneration.

Philip Wolmuth/Panos

A volunteer delivers a meal-on-wheels: nearly 20 per cent of Britain's population are engaged in voluntary work.

THE FACE OF POLITICS TO COME

What makes a society strong? The vitality of its community life, maintains Mike Lowe.

In Britain and the USA politicians have been sounding a new note—perhaps a little faint and uncertain at first, but sure to become louder as the century progresses. It is the surprising sound of the politician concerned with the moral and spiritual health of their people.

There are lots of reasons why people might think this is a bad idea. Two centuries of Enlightenment tradition say that politics and religion are separate spheres and shouldn't be mixed. And, as Bill Clinton found to his cost, public figures live under the constant scrutiny of a media hungry for scandal. Nevertheless, these liberal democracies have reached an impasse in which traditional political remedies don't seem to work any more. Hence the need for new solutions.

In a global economy, the politicians who we directly elect are increasingly powerless to make decisions that affect our lives. We are affected by interest rates set by banks in far away countries and by economic growth or recession on other continents. Furthermore, since the end of the Cold War, ideological differences on how to run the economy have disappeared. At elections we are not asked to choose the best economic system but simply who we think will be better managers.

All of which means that the debate, which was once centred on the economy, has focussed more on rights. The Left has been concerned with equality, wanting government to even out the playing field for minorities, the dispossessed and disadvantaged. The Right has wanted more rights for the majority, distrusting government intervention in general and pressing for small government.

In Britain we have a passengers' charter outlining the rights of rail travellers, a patients' charter for 'customers' of the National Health Service and a parents' charter for schools. In America, with more lawyers per head than any other nation, every citizen has the right to sue. Yet, as recent passengers of Britain's rail system would agree, many fundamental problems can't be solved by handing out more rights.

Politicians are discovering the need to rekindle a sense of our moral responsibilities towards each other. As British Prime Minister Tony Blair says: 'People are not separate economic actors competing in the marketplace of life. They are citizens of a community. We are social beings, nurtured in families and communities and human only because we develop the moral power of personal responsibility for ourselves and each other. Britain is stronger as a team than as a collection of selfish players.'

Blair has not been shy in proclaiming a new style of politics, the much vaunted 'Third Way'. In his book of the same name, Anthony Giddens, allegedly Blair's favourite intellectual, writes: 'The theme of community is fundamental to the new politics.... Civic decline is real and visible in sectors of contemporary societies.... It is seen in the weakening sense of solidarity in some local communities and urban neighbourhoods, high levels of crime, and the break-up of marriages and families.... Government can and must play a major part in renewing civic culture.'

Similar thinking can be found in the Clinton administration, particularly in Hillary Clinton's book *It takes a village to raise a child*. This philosophy has been labelled 'communitarianism' and owes much to Amitai Etzioni, a professor at George Washington University.

The starting point of this philosophy is a recognition that we depend on one another. If you think about who made the food you eat, the clothes you wear, the people who supply your electricity, water etc, you quickly realize that each of us depend on many thousands of others around the world for our normal daily lives. Similar calculations can be done about the people who depend on us.

As the *Communitarian platform*—a kind of manifesto of communitarian thought—puts it: 'Neither human existence nor individual liberty can be sustained for long outside the interdependent and overlapping communities to which all of us belong. Nor can any community long survive unless its members dedicate some of their attention, energy and resources to shared projects. The exclusive pursuit of private interest erodes the network of social environments on which we all depend, and is destructive to our shared experiment in democratic self-government. For these reasons, we hold that the rights of individuals cannot long be preserved without a communitarian perspective.' (www.communitariannetwork.org)

The argument is for some kind of balance between individual rights, and responsibilities to the community. Bestowing rights is fairly easy for a government. Much harder is to make people feel responsible. As Blair puts it: 'Democracy can flourish only as part of a rich culture of rights respected and duties performed. Most of the rights and duties relate to community life beyond the sway of the politician or the ordinary scope of the courts.'

The answer, say communitarians, is to encourage small groups of all shapes and sizes and varieties, where people feel that their contribution matters. Such small groups—known as 'civil society'—were a feature of 19th century America particularly noted by the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville on his travels. He concluded that such groups taught Americans the 'art of association' and the 'habits of the heart' which balanced their individualism with a sense of responsibility for the community. America little resembled the European model of a state at that time—which was more or less absolute monarchy. America was more a 'community of communities'.

The German thinker Karl Mannheim also observed: 'In small groups in which everyone feels that a great deal depends upon his actions, and learns to act upon his own responsibility instead of losing himself in the anonymity of the mass, social patterns grow up in which individuality can almost certainly develop.'

A recent study in the USA found that 40 per cent of Americans—some 75 million—belong to at least one small group that meets regularly. The author, Robert Wuthnow, concluded, 'Small groups are doing a better job than many of their critics would like to think. The communities they create are seldom frail. People feel cared for. They help one another.... The attachments that develop among the members of small groups demonstrate clearly that we are not a society of rugged individualists who wish to go it entirely alone but, rather, that... even amidst the dislocating tendencies of our society, we are capable of banding together in bonds of mutual support.'

Similarly, in Britain nearly 20 per cent of the population engage in some form of voluntary work during the course of the average year, and about 10 per cent do so on a weekly basis. Moreover younger people are involved in voluntary work at least as frequently as they were in earlier generations.

According to Anthony Giddens, the area where civil society is least developed is in areas marginalized by the sweep of economic and social change, and it is here that government can actively encourage local self-help organizations by offering money and training.

But, if small groups have a role in developing responsible attitudes, by far the most effective small group is the family. As Giddens puts it: 'The family is a basic institution of civil society.' He sees family policy as 'a key test for the new politics'. The picture doesn't look good. In the UK in 1994, 32 per cent of births occurred outside marriage. Across western societies, the divorce rate has risen steeply.

The *Communitarian platform* states, 'Bringing children into the world entails a moral responsibility to provide, not only material necessities, but also moral education and character formation.' It argues for policies that make it easier for parents to have time to care for their children, tax schemes that don't penalize marriage and that 'divorce laws should be modified, not to prevent divorce, but to signal society's concern'. On these policies, Blair's government has a mixed record, with its pressure on single parents to go out to work.

After the family, argue communitarians, schools have the key role in shaping moral values and responsible attitudes. This goes against recent traditions in education which say that we shouldn't impose our values on children, but encourage them to come to their own conclusions—an idea which is at best a half-truth.

Research by Professor Robert Coles shows that children search actively for values, moral purpose and meaning. If educators withhold their own values and sense of purpose this signals to the children that these questions are 'off limits' and that shared purpose and values do not exist. In attempting not to impose values, we simply impose the doctrine of moral relativism.

Once again, Blair's government has a mixed record here. Its emphasis on academic achievement in schools has led to less time for activities which develop social character. Since there are no exams to be taken on character (at least this side of the grave), moral education doesn't show up in the league tables by which schools and teachers tend to be judged and there is little incentive for teachers to work at it.

Finally, there is the moral role of leadership itself. Most cultures have taken politics and religion to be part of the same fabric. Their separation in modern western society is an exception that seems hard to sustain. As Blair puts it: 'Individuals prosper best within a strong and cohesive society... a society which is fragmented and divided, where people feel no sense of shared purpose, is unlikely to produce well-adjusted and responsible citizens.' It is easy to parody Blair as the 'Vicar of St Albion', but this may increasingly be the style of politics to come. ■

Associated Press

Tony Blair: 'the moral power of personal responsibility'

BOOKMARK

Jerusalem: a place to test the heart

Peter Everington returns often to *The Testing of Hearts*, a book written amid the tensions of the Holy Land.

How does a community of scholars from differing church backgrounds live together in a way that is recognizably Christian, especially when they live among the rival halves of the Semitic family in the Holy Land, Jews and Arabs? Part of the answer is to have a rector who is alert to his own spiritual needs, and equipped to draw the best out of others.

A proverb of King Solomon says: 'A furnace for silver, a foundry for gold, but the Lord for the testing of hearts.' Donald Nicholl was the Rector of the Ecumenical Institute for Theological Research at Tantur in Israel from 1981-85. His book is dedicated to all who shared the testing of hearts with him in Jerusalem during that period. It consists mainly of his journal, and articles written for the UK Catholic weekly, *The Tablet*.

The Rector's was a varied life. One afternoon he started a discussion in his apartment with a German biblical scholar, when a furious argument began in the corridor outside. It was two Arab shepherds who expected him to arbitrate on which had the right to graze sheep on the Institute's land. Nicholl invited them both in. As soon as they were seated, a message came from the reception desk that the Cardinal Archbishop of Toulouse had arrived unannounced with his secretary and would like to introduce himself straightaway.

The March 1982 journal entries show disquiet about a violent quarrel between two of the scholars known as Olaf and Canute. Over several weeks each tried to enlist the scholars on his side, while explosively rejecting the Rector's mediation. How would the Institute be able to celebrate Easter in good conscience? Then at mass one morning, Olaf suddenly shouted from one side of the chapel to the other, 'I forgive you Canute, and I ask your forgiveness,' and they embraced before the astonished congregation.

One evening Nicholl issued a rebuke to the scholars at a community meeting. As soon as he spoke, he knew it had come from 'the wrong place inside me'. He immediately apologized for the damage done but felt he must look deeper into his nature. Pacing the flat roof of the Institute under the night sky, he discovered roots of resentment and envy going back to his childhood. A great peace descended, and he could greet the new day and his colleagues with a smile. 'The whole episode has been a great lesson to me,' he writes. 'If only you work away at the rotten areas of yourself on which the light of Christ has been shed, then the burden of Christ will prove so light as to be no burden at all.'

Tantur is near Bethlehem, and looks out on Beit Sahur, Beit Jala, and Gilo, names well known from recent killings. Equally violent events occurred during the years when this book was written.

Nicholl had been a scholar at Tantur for a year in the 1970s. Early in his stay he concluded that Jerusalem was the most testing of cities to live in because it required you to exercise the virtue of justice every moment. 'People pile one lie upon another so thick that the truth demanded of them by the holy city shall remain hidden.' How then, he asks, can you know if you have passed the test? It is simple. If the spontaneous reaction of your heart on hearing of killings on either side is ideological ('they deserve it') rather than human, your heart is corrupted and you should go on pilgrimage till it is cleansed.

His own childhood home was a terraced house in the compound of a brickworks in the north of England. This gave him a fellow feeling with the Palestinian men who left home before daybreak, and were often humiliated at checkpoints, on their way to labouring jobs in Israel. Read in one way, *The Testing of Hearts* is a plea for the dignity of the Palestinians. Read in another, it urges compassion for the Jews of Israel.

Nicholl quotes a Sephardic (Oriental) Jew, Gustav Kars: 'Affliction dies away in time but shame and humiliation ever renew themselves. A shock psychologically dominated is called a trauma. People afflicted with a trauma are mentally diseased. Every psychiatrist knows that a person afflicted with a trauma unconsciously strives to recreate the situation that is at its source, in order to be given a "second chance" to act differently. Ashkenazi [European] leadership in Israel unconsciously tends to provoke a new holocaust—a holocaust where Jews will not die "like vermin" but as heroes and in a way commanding admiration. I claim that this alone is capable of explaining Israeli behaviour.'

A campaigning Auschwitz survivor called Arnold told Nicholl he was exhausted, and asked if he could stay a while at Tantur. Nicholl brushed aside the rules and made him a guest of the Institute for five weeks. At the end he said, 'During the course of my life, many, many Christians have spoken to me about how much they loved me, and what they intended to do for me. But in every case it eventually came clear that ultimately, somewhere at the back of their minds, they were wanting me to convert—and my being aware of that eliminated everything they had previously said to me or done for me. But here at Tantur, for the first time, I feel that I have been completely accepted as I am, by everyone in the community.'

One day the Israeli Governor of Bethlehem, an Army Colonel, remarked that the Rector was trying to be neutral as regards Arabs and Jews. Nicholl replied that neutrality gives a sense of being unconcerned. 'What we try to do is be on both sides, never to lose our sense of compassion for either Arabs or Jews, who are both caught in a situation which is largely not of their own making.'

The Colonel responded with great warmth, and Nicholl comments in his journal that night, 'Suddenly I had a glimpse of the man's heart and an inkling of what it must cost a sensitive man to exercise high office in an occupying force: trying to carry out as humanely as possible a policy which is inevitably oppressive.'

Peter Turnley/ Corbis

Nicholl observed that some westerners came to Jerusalem to pursue their agenda without any feeling for what was going on in the minds of Palestinians and Israelis. And religious workers could preach a great truth like forgiveness, while not allowing their own hearts to be tested in this area.

Dorothy Nicholl makes occasional appearances in the book. On the birthday of the Romanian Archimandrite Vasileus she can be found visiting him in hospital with a cake she has baked. And in 1985 she makes a notable intervention at a farewell party given to the Nicholls by the Arab community in the area. Solemn orations have been delivered. Nicholl tries to lighten the mood with some jokes before turning to his wife to say a few words. The Tantur journal ends: 'She had hardly got a sentence out before she was unmistakably weeping; and that set me off, and many of the Arabs present also began to weep. In a way it was marvellous, a truly Arab occasion with plenty of speeches and many demonstrations of emotion leading to a welcome catharsis, finishing up with everyone sitting around, restored to cheerfulness, unashamedly tucking into the coffee and the mountains of cake.'

I had known the Middle East for many years before the first edition of *The Testing of Hearts* appeared in 1989. It is the most profound introduction to the Israel-Palestine situation by a westerner that I know, and I return to it often.

For most of his working life Nicholl taught modern history at Keele University in England. He had mastered Latin, Greek, German, French, Irish Gaelic and Welsh, and (as this book shows) could quote the Hindu, Buddhist and Taoist sages.

In 1994 I wrote somewhat diffidently to ask if I might come to see him with a Sudanese friend whose daughter was about to start at Keele. Together with a British colleague we were invited to his home, where Dorothy produced a five-course lunch for three virtual strangers. She and Donald listened intently to the Sudanese with his anguish about his country, and shared their own longings in an outpouring of heart, mind, soul and strength.

Donald Nicholl died of cancer in his home in 1997. The second edition of his book is introduced and edited by Adrian Hastings. It is supplemented by Nicholl's meditations during his last months, and by poems written by two of his former students who found deeper meaning for their lives through him. ■

The Testing of Hearts is published by Darton Longman & Todd, ISBN 0-232-52285-5.

Apology

The editors regret that Robert Webb's byline was inadvertently omitted from the profile of Lee H Hamilton in the last issue.

FOR A CHANGE

FAC depends on charitable gifts to extend its outreach, particularly in countries with currency restrictions. Any gifts in the UK through covenants, Gift Aid or legacies are tax deductible. These and other gifts should be made to: Moral Re-Armament, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD, UK. (Registered Charity No 226334). Bank account details and Gift Aid forms are available on request.

US cities dialogue on race

Hope in the Cities (HIC), based in Richmond, Virginia, aims to 'build partnerships for racial reconciliation'. When, in 1997, President Clinton announced that his administration would promote honest conversations across America 'to lift the burden of race', HIC was one of the organizations called in to assist the process. HIC trains dialogue facilitators and leaders of interracial coalitions in several US cities (see *FAC* Oct/Nov 1999). HIC's National Director, Robert Corcoran, reports recent developments:

Photos: Robert Corcoran

A 'walk through history' took place in Baltimore last October. More than 2,000 walkers wore 'master's passes' bearing the name of a slave and carried flowers to place in the water at the end of the two-mile trail along the harbour front. They carried banners reading 'present hope for healing the past'.

Thirty-six years ago, the US was riveted by pictures of state troopers attacking voting-rights marchers with dogs and clubs in Selma, Alabama. It was a turning point in the civil rights struggle. But change has been slow to come in Selma. Joe Smitherman, who was mayor at the time of the notorious 'Bloody Sunday' events of 1965, remained in office until August 2000 when he was finally unseated by Selma's first black mayor, James Perkins. Last November Perkins was in Richmond to promote a message of healing. He spoke to over 300 people at the fifth annual Metropolitan Richmond Day.

'Hate is an enemy. It is contagious,' said Perkins. 'Those who hate expect to be hated. It is as deadly as a bullet. Fear is an enemy. It consumes our existence and causes us not to accept emancipation, it causes us not to embrace freedom and it causes us to run from reconciliation. Comfort is an enemy. We can be comfortable with our anger, our hate, our fear and our distrust.'

According to Perkins, the reconciliation we are looking for is not between races or religions. 'The truth and reconciliation we seek is within each individual. We spend too much time trying to check other folks. Check yourselves!' Inspired by the example of South Africa, Perkins' goal is to create a truth and reconciliation commission in Selma.

Virginia State Representative Viola Baskerville responded to Perkins: 'We hear so much about the economic divide, but there is a reconciliation divide.' Deeply moved by the speaker, she concluded, 'Perhaps two cities with such a tattered, tarnished past can indeed be beacons of hope.'

Earlier 500 people filled every seat at a reception in Dayton, Ohio, launching the city's Dialogue on Race Relations. 'When this many gather there is cause for concern and cause for hope,' said Montgomery County Commissioner Vicki Peg. 'The numbers indicate there is a concern about this issue but no one gathers like this if there is no hope.'

Judge Walter Rice, co-chair of the initiative, said, 'Dayton is the third most segregated city in the nation. The single biggest obstacle [to progress] is our inability to speak with one another.' The turn-out of Dayton citizens indicated that this is about to change. As the lead editorial of the *Dayton Daily News* put it, 'Dayton is ready to bridge racial divides.'

Meanwhile the Richmond Community Foundation, the Jackson Foundation and the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation of North Carolina have announced grants totaling $60,000 to support a potentially far-reaching metropolitan dialogue programme led by Hope in the Cities and the Richmond Hill ecumenical retreat centre.

Harold Saunders, Director of International Affairs at the Kettering Foundation, is advising the project. As a member of the Carter administration, Saunders helped broker the Camp David Peace Accords. He was in Richmond last fall to speak to a group of 65 leaders of organizations who will form the steering committee for the project.

A series of 10 48-hour consultations, each involving groups of 20 citizens, started in January and will continue through May. The consultations focus on how the issues of race, economics and jurisdiction separate the region and contribute to the isolation of the city. The goal of the project is to develop a sustained process that leads to change in public policy. ■

LETTER

From Adrian Dence, Solihull, UK

The Brook Advisory Centre has published a guide for young people entitled *Say yes, say no, say maybe*, which causes me great concern. The book is written from the premise that young teenagers will probably indulge in recreational sex.

There appears to be a virtual absence of the moral dimension. Certainly advice is given to say 'no' on occasion but, as the title of the book suggests, this is a technical manual; it clearly suggests that indulgence in this sacred area of life is quite normal. And this at an age in a young person's life when his or her emotions cannot possibly be matured sufficiently to comprehend the implications of their actions.

The consequences of this sexual activity hardly need elaboration. Apart from the tragedy of unwanted children one must mention the incidence of broken families which result from the habit of promiscuity.

What can be done? Continuous publicity in the media for the moral approach of course. In the first instance I would suggest a seminar to be organized either in London or Birmingham, possibly following the format of a television debate to which leading figures from the world of education and the religions be invited.

I would be pleased to organize this event and would invite interested readers to contact me.

Finding food for the soul

Blair Cummock

Oksana Kuchman: 'on a new track'

Ukrainian teacher Oksana Kuchman says that her 'spiritual renovation' began when she joined a pilgrimage to the Catholic shrine of Lourdes in France. It was organized by her church in Lviv which she describes as 'a beautiful, ancient town in the western part of Ukraine near the border with Poland'.

She had just left Lviv State University with an advanced degree in English Language and Literature. She was not sure what she wanted to do with her life and was dissatisfied with her temporary job. 'I was an ordinary selfish girl who took it for granted she would receive everything she wanted with the minimum of effort,' she says. 'I was arrogant and careless of others' feelings, convinced that almost everybody owed me something.' She also liked to humiliate people. 'It was a form of entertainment,' she says. But despite all this she continued to attend church every Sunday and it was there that she learned about the trip to France.

'France was a country I used to dream about, so I decided to go.' She didn't have particularly high expectations. 'It was a way of having a good rest and perhaps meeting interesting new people.' But something happened there that she finds hard to explain. 'I began to think over my actions and to analyze my previous way of life. I felt a key was being turned inside me. God seemed to be giving me a new chance, helping me to come alive to him in a new way, opening a door.'

She wasn't at all sure what this 'call' meant or where it would lead. 'I didn't feel I had the spiritual strength or depth to find the next steps on my own,' she explains. It was just then that she had the opportunity to take part in a teachers seminar in nearby Pidbuzh. It was organized by Foundations for Freedom, a programme of MRA reaching out to young people in the countries of the former Soviet Union. She recalls that during the five days of the seminar, in the discussions and in talks with the facilitators from western Europe, whole new vistas opened for her. 'My soul needed food and I found it there. When I returned home I found I had discovered fresh confidence and a new mental toughness. It was as if I was on a new track. I no longer fell into depression or gave up when things didn't go the way I wanted them to. There was also a new love for, and patience with, people. I was able to trust them and to forgive them for their faults. Even if I didn't immediately know exactly what decisions to make about the future, I knew how to make them and how to move ahead.'

Soon she realized that what she really wanted to do was to teach. She found a job as lecturer in English at the Western Ukrainian College in Lviv. 'I believe that through teaching I can fully express myself and at the same time be useful to others.' She says she has begun to care about other people. She now meets once a week with a group of students where they can discuss personal problems as well as wider issues and the things that really interest them—'just like we did at the seminar in Pidbuzh'. 'I'd like to help them and myself to change something inside us,' she says. She dreams, too, of improving the country's education system.

She has also begun to think of those leaving college who have great difficulty in finding employment. She aims to start a project in which young people can be given practical work experience in large companies abroad, in return for just their board and lodging. A condition would be their return to the Ukraine once the agreed period with the company was completed. 'Of course I will need support for such a project and I am looking for potential partners who might be interested,' she says.

Paul Williams

Karen Elliott Greisdorf

WEBBSITE

by Robert Webb

I, too, have a dream

We journalists are often characterized as rude, invaders of privacy, biased and even dishonest. But for most journalists, most of the time, this is inaccurate. Most simply try to do a good job. We often make mistakes, though we're not always willing to admit or correct them even as we focus on the errors of others, especially politicians.

So when as a young journalist I read about Moral Re-Armament, I was delighted that some group was trying to encourage politicians to be more honest and statesmanlike. It didn't occur to me that I might also need that encouragement. That was to change when, a few years later, I attended an MRA meeting at Mackinac Island, Michigan. The year before, in Chicago, I'd covered my first national presidential-nominating convention, the highlight of my career to that point. But what I found—and was to write about—at Mackinac clearly topped that experience.

There I found people of about every race, colour and creed and from many countries who had discovered something new, uniting and thus revolutionary. It was a new world in microcosm. As a child of the Deep South, born and reared in Mississippi, I had its traditional, segregationist views on race. It hadn't bothered me that schools, restrooms, water fountains and neighbourhoods were segregated, that African-Americans were to stay in 'their place'. The 'Southern way of life' was deeply rooted in me. At the time, as associate editor of the *State Times* in Jackson, Mississippi's state capital, I was the faithful conduit through editorials and signed columns of the region's traditional white views on race.

But at Mackinac I found a purpose that was to change me radically. On a food-serving shift there, for example, I worked with a young black fellow from Detroit. We swiftly became friends. Then one afternoon I saw an MRA film, *Freedom*—written by Africans about a mythical African country moving from colonial to black majority rule—that was to drive a stake into my racist heart. As the film ended, I knew I had to apologize to the first black man I saw coming out of that theatre for the way we in the South had treated his race. So I apologized to an African of middle age, one whose face bespoke deep wisdom. I will never forget his response. 'After the apology, what?' I've been trying to answer that question ever since.

Part of the answer came as I listened to my inner voice and faced the absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love to record the wrongs I'd committed. I came up with a soul-searing list and began to make restitution as best I could. For example, I wrote my high school principal about cheating as a student. That brought an invitation, which I accepted, to address a student assembly at my old school. After a glowing introduction by the school superintendent, I stood up and said, 'I'm here because I cheated in high school.' Then I told them about what I'd found. The principal said afterwards, 'You came at the right time. We were about to have examinations.'

I also had to reimburse the New Orleans newspaper for which I'd worked for padding my expense account. The paper donated the funds to MRA. I apologized to an old editor I'd maligned in print, resulting in a warm and memorable evening with him. And I made restitution to another publisher for misusing his photo darkroom. One of my toughest acts was to confess to a US attorney deeds for which I thought he might prosecute. Thankfully, he didn't. Wonderfully, each act of restitution brought an inner liberation and indescribable joy.

As you might imagine, this experience of change led to a radical new approach to my work and life. I began a daily habit of listening for direction to my inner voice and writing down the thoughts that came. I began to reach out to African-Americans and to give readers the vision of an America modelling how people of every race and background could work together for the good of all. I wrote to a fellow Southerner, Martin Luther King Jr, about my Mackinac experience, and received a warm reply. Later I was to cover for *The Cincinnati Enquirer* the 1963 March on Washington, where he gave his 'I have a dream' speech. I share Dr King's dream for a nation where character, not colour, is what counts. Journalists with that vision can help mightily to architect the hate-free, greed-free, fear-free society for which we all long.

Robert Webb is a retired journalist living in Alexandria, Virginia, USA.

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by the Rt Revd James Jones

Painting by William Cameron Johnson

The notorious slave ship *Zong*

Britannia's unfinished business

On 11 September 2000 the Bishop of Liverpool took up the theme of history and repentance in his 'Thought for the Day' on BBC Radio 4's 'Today' programme. He has given us permission to reprint it.

Beneath the dome of the Royal Albert Hall, the Last Night of the Proms* played to a capacity audience and, through giant screens, to thousands in Hyde Park, Birmingham and Liverpool. *Land of Hope and Glory*, *Jerusalem* and *Rule Britannia* ruled the airwaves echoing with the raucous voices of the crowds. The sight of so many young people brings the hope that the Proms will last for another generation at least.

It's a great musical tradition:

Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves:
Britons never will be slaves

Penned by James Thomson in the early 18th century, these words became the battle cry of our sea-faring Empire.

It was fitting that the cameras cut to Liverpool because this was the premier city of Britain, the Heathrow of the 19th century, from which so many great ships sailed and traded and ruled the waves.

But it was—like life itself—an ambivalent trade, in both virtue and vice. For through this wealthy port travelled a black cargo of slaves, most of whom never survived the journey.

In May of this year I was in America, invited by the Bishop of Virginia to lecture at his clergy conference. A black woman priest showed me around the city of Richmond and down the verdant banks of the James River along which the slave ships sailed. Five hundred thousand slaves were traded through Richmond alone.

We stopped at Lumpkins Jail where black women and men were herded, hoarded and sold.

We saw the site of the gallows where they were hanged for the slightest misdemeanour. I found myself weeping under the oppression of the memory.

And then in July I was in West Africa with 20 young people from Liverpool at the invitation of the Bishop of Akure in Nigeria, where black leaders had once colluded with white traders to export their own people into slavery. In an interview on the State Radio I repeated the Lord Mayor of Liverpool's remorse at our city's involvement in the slave trade.

I know it's now fashionable for leaders to say sorry for the sins of the past. I know it's debatable as to whether they have the right or the responsibility to do so. Public confession, however, begs this question—how do you find absolution if you leave God out of the repentance? Who can forgive you when the victims are dead and gone?

The repentance that God requires is a change in attitude followed by action. That is why, whenever I hear:

Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves;
Britons never will be slaves

I feel I ought to add, with an eye to those made slaves through debt here and overseas, 'Nor will we ever allow others to be taken into slavery'.

For only then would we have all the bricks and mortar to finish building 'Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land'.

**International readers may like to know that the Last Night of the Proms is the culmination of an annual season of concerts in London, dating from 1895. Traditionally, the Last Night ends with patriotic songs, in which the audience join enthusiastically.* ■