

UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION

--WESTMINSTER--

Twinned with UNA Connecticut For World Peace, Disarmament, Development and Human Rights
JOINT PRESIDENTS: THE BARONESS COX OF QUEENSBURY, LORD RUSSELL-JOHNSTON, THE LORD JUDD OF PORTSEA



Annual Report 2001-2002

The Westminster branch continues to be the largest branch nationwide. Its proximity to Parliament and Whitehall offer opportunities to organise and participate in events which serve to project the United Nations in the community and to bring together those seeking information on its work. We work closely with the London Regional Council of the United Nations Association, the United Nations Parliamentary Group and those elements of civil society which work in the fields of peace, development and human rights. This is an enormous canvas in which to work and we depend upon the support of our members and friends to ensure that we maintain as full a programme as possible. I will now summarise our activity over the past year.

Meetings

The branch held a joint meeting with the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) addressed by UNIDO's new Secretary-General, Carlos Magarinos. HE Dr Ismail Serageldin, former Vice-President of the World Bank, addressed a meeting we organised in the House of Commons titled *Globalisation and the fight against poverty*. Also, the branch set up a meeting titled *Whatever happened to the UN Conference on Racism? Twelve steps the UK can take now to move from STOP to Fast Forward!* Copies of our document outlining those twelve steps were widely circulated to racial equality committees throughout London. We retain an interest in this matter through Suzanne Long, Human Rights officer at UNA Headquarters who is a member of the Home Office committee reviewing the outcome of the UN conference on Racism and seeking to dovetail this with new domestic legislation. On World Maritime Day, 27 September, the Branch was represented at the unveiling of the memorial to the Seafarer at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

Annual Conference

Westminster Branch, sometimes in association with London Region, submitted amendments to the draft Policy Statement on matters relating to UNESCO's faltering Culture of Peace programme (adopted); the UN Conference on Racism (adopted): UK initiatives in implementing new race-related initiatives (referred back); and the New Partnerships in Africa's Development (adopted). Our resolution on the shortcomings of the UN's ICT programme did not reach the Final Agenda. Delegates were informed that such resolutions would fall automatically but the branch successfully challenged this arbitrary decision by the Chairman of Annual Conference and the Procedure Committee. Our resolution together with others which only reached the Preliminary Agenda was referred back to the UNA Board. We will watch developments.

Schools Initiative

Helen O'Malley has initiated a dialogue with the City of Westminster's Director of Education, seeking to set up a Model Security Council or a MUNGA for schools on the City. A meeting with interested teachers, planned for July, has been postponed to the Autumn.

UNA-Connecticut

We continue to exchange information with the Connecticut Chapter of UNA-USA., a link set up by the late Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen. Her dynamism will be sadly missed but we are determined that her loss will serve to strengthen our links with Connecticut and those projects which she initiated.

Membership

We intend to hold a social event for new members during the Autumn.

The Committee

This year, we say farewell to Elizabeth McKeith our longtime Membership Secretary who has served the branch and the Committee so tirelessly for so many years. She has been one of the strong pillars on which the branch has been built and we are pleased that she will remain an active member. Titus Alexander, a former Chairman, leaves us too but I am sure we will call upon his expertise over the coming year.

Rick Ballanger Award

Rick Ballanger, a former Vice-Chairman of the branch, served as Deputy Head Teacher of Westminster City School until his cruelly early death. Each year, in his memory, the branch together with the London & South East Region, funds a member of school to join a UNA study tour. This year, there have been no suitable tours but we are determined to continue the programme in the coming and future years.

Fair Trade Fair

The branch took a stand at this two-day event, together with the *Forum for a Stronger UN*. The stand was visited by some hundreds of people and we intend to return to Central Hall, Westminster this December.

The Newsletter

We published a pilot *Newsletter* in January. There were compliments on its design and content but it was disappointing that so few members responded to the questionnaire; feedback from members is important and we will try again in the coming year.

Club membership

The committee has negotiated reduced rate terms for membership of the *Commonwealth Club* and the *Royal Overseas League*. Details will be included in the next mailing.

The Calendar for Peace

This remarkable initiative, the brainchild of Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen, was printed in larger numbers than ever this year with 35,000 copies being sent to the Winter Olympics at Salt Lake City. Here, we sent multiple copies to the Directors of Education of all London boroughs, their Racial Equality Committees and also to all High-Commissions and embassies. This activity led to many requests for further copies, even from Kyrgyzstan! We

have committed ourselves to co-operating with UNA Connecticut in compiling and funding the 2003 Peace Calendar.

Flag Day

Our volunteers were on the streets during Flag Day as usual but the real heroes, as in previous years, were Elaine Adams and Elizabeth McKeith, so ably assisted by Helen O'Malley who organised us all. Our debt to them is immense as we raised £5600 of which £700 will be retained by the branch. We need to review how we tackle Flag Day 2002. The logistic challenge is immense; London Transport has offered us 26 venues this year. Can we do these justice? A meeting of interested members will take place in September.

The future

It has been a privilege to serve as your Chairman for the past year. I look forward to a busy programme for the branch over the next year. I hope this will include meetings to address the developing Iraq crisis, the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development, the UN's continuing work in the fields of human cloning and the rights of the human genome. Also, in memory of Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen, an expert on the Dutch jurist and humanist, Hugo Grotius, we will invite a leading expert on international law to speak on the subject, possibly referring to current issues. Grotius wrote *De jure belli ac pacis* [concerning the law of war and peace], usually considered the first definitive text on international law. However, for all the ambitions of your committee, they are of little import if not supported by the membership of the branch. We urge you to attend our meetings, suggest new themes and programmes -and above all, join our Executive Committee. Our regular meetings include excursions into international affairs, reviews of UNA's domestic programmes -and more. In the first instance, please contact Paul Mrazek, our Honorary Secretary or myself.

David Wardrop, Chair