

UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION

--WESTMINSTER--

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



Report on the Branch's activities 2004-2005

The Branch enjoyed another busy year and with the benefit of a generous legacy from the estate of Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen, now has the opportunity to embark upon an exciting and sustainable programme to promote the United Nations and its many challenges and programmes. Our plans for the coming two years are comprehensive and demanding and require the support of our expanding branch membership.

Activities

Strengthening the UN Security Council

In November, we brought together diplomats from the Indian High Commission and the embassies of Japan, Brazil and Germany, the 'G4' countries which in partnership seek permanent membership of the UN Security Council. The 250 strong audience heard cogent and well co-ordinated arguments for their admission, the first such joint presentation to be made worldwide. Lord Judd, one of our Joint Presidents, chaired the meeting which was marked by spirited debate.

The Middle East Peace Process

Immediately following the Palestinian elections in January, we held a meeting in the House of Lords to discuss the possible outcome. Our speakers included Alistair Crooke, former EU negotiator, Middle East Peace Process; Arthur Goodman, Jews for Justice for Palestinians & Joint Action for Israeli-Palestinian Peace and Dr Sufyan Elissa, Nuffield College, Oxford. The meeting was chaired by Lord Garden.

Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture

The third Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law Lecture was delivered by Judge Rosalyn Higgins, a member of the International Court of Justice. Her lecture titled *The International Court of Justice in a New Century* reviewed the challenges facing the Court as the United Nations itself becomes the subject of calls for reform. Some of these mirror those facing the UN itself and are just as intractable. Her address features on the UNA-UK website and will also feature on the new branch website (December 2005). We were delighted to organise the lecture together with the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS), University of London which was held at its excellent Brunei Theatre. We are grateful to the international law company Clifford Chance for offering to support the annual lecture for three years and once again to the Bar Council of England for their continuing guidance and financial support. We are proud that this event has become a flagship occasion in the UNA calendar in London.

International Day of UN Peacekeepers

Our second conference built on the foundations of last year's pioneer event. Again, it was hosted by the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies (RUSI). The 2nd Annual Folke Bernadotte Lecture was delivered by General Satish Nambiar, ret, Director of the United Service Institute, India and a member of the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on UN Reform. We invited presentations by the four winners of the Wilkinson Sword of Peace Awards for 2003, the first time in the thirty-year history of the awards that all winners had shared a platform. Three recounted their work in dealing with the civilian population in Iraq. Other presentations were made by Jonas Alberoth, Director General (acting), Folke Bernadotte Academy, Sweden; Gp Capt Andrew Steele, Assistant Director Peace Support Operations, Joint Doctrine & Concepts Centre, Ministry of Defence; Professor James Gow, Department of War Studies, King's College London; and David Wardrop, Chairman of the Westminster branch. During the conference, twenty six defence attaches laid wreaths at the Cenotaph for fallen UN peacekeepers. Once again, we are grateful for funding from the Global Conflict Prevention Pool, a joint project of the FCO, DFID and the MOD.

The UN Inspector

An enjoyable cultural diversion was a 20 strong visit to the National Theatre to see a preview of *The UN Inspector*, freely adapted from Gogol's *The Government Inspector* by David Farr.

UNA Annual Conference

The Branch was well represented at the annual conference, held at the London School of Economics. The agenda format was unfortunate in that no resolutions given priority for debate by ballot were reached. This led to much frustration and hopefully a revised format for 2005. In summary, our optimism shown in last year's report proved premature.

2005 Calendar for Peace

Westminster UNA distributed 1200 copies of the 2005 United Nations Calendar for Peace to schools in Westminster and to racial equality councils, education authorities, embassies, churches, mosques and synagogues throughout London. This initiative of the late Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen of the Connecticut Chapter of the United Nations Association in the United States goes from strength to strength worldwide.

UNA-Connecticut

Westminster UNA retains close links with our twin, UNA Connecticut. Alas, we were unable to arrange reciprocal visits this year. Alicia Heyton, a UNA Connecticut member represented our twin at the enjoyable annual Christmas Party for the Executive Committee.

Our Funds

During the year, the Branch benefitted from the generous legacy of the late Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen. The Executive Committee has agreed a cautious investment policy and will continue to seek external funding for its annual flagship events.

Our Future

Our central involvement in organising the UN60 service held in St Paul's Cathedral which with the important conference on Natural Disaster Reduction took place after the year-end and will be for my successor to report. Before Christmas, the branch will introduce a comprehensive and informative website to make all members proud. We seek more support from our members and ask for better attendance at our meetings, more introductions to those who can join us as members and more generous voluntary contributions towards our programmes.