



Office of External Affairs

External affairs features once again in the Universal House of Justice's Ridván message to the Bahá'ís of the world: On many occasions during this one-year endeavour, the external affairs activities of the Faith were especially visible. Consider, for example, the instances of Bahá'í representatives' having participated prominently in the millennial events that took place in May, August and September at the urging of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The implications of so close and conspicuous an involvement of the Bahá'í International Community with the processes of the Lesser Peace will require the passage of time to be properly understood.

Among other highlights was the continental colloquium organised in India by the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, a new agency operating under the aegis of the Bahá'í-International Community. Adopting the theme of 'science, religion and development', the conference featured the participation of leading non-governmental organisations of India, as well as that of institutions of such renown as UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank. In October, the Bahá'í World News Service (BWNS) was launched on the Internet with the intention of reaching both Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í audiences with news stories about developments throughout the Bahá'í world.

We have our own exciting achievements here in the UK, notably the National Assembly's launch of the Institute for Social Cohesion with two seminars in the House of Commons, hosted by the All Party Parliamentary Friends of the Bahá'ís, and the appearance of the first edition of the new external affairs quarterly, UK Bahá'í Review.

The House of Justice's letter of 9th January 2001 to the Counsellors' conference at the World Centre shows that external affairs will continue to be an 'indispensable endeavour' amongst all the other areas of activity that we have to initiate and maintain: Bahá'í-communities are, of course, engaged in a range of indispensable endeavours such as public information activity, proclamation efforts, external affairs work, production of literature, and complex social and economic development projects. Most certainly, as plans are devised, they will also address these challenges.

The Institute for Social Cohesion will be holding its first major colloquium in the Spring of 2002. The theme will be Building Social Cohesion: the impact of science and religion on policy making and we shall be inviting government representatives, parliamentarians and people from civil society organisations to take part.

Before the colloquium begins we shall be sending a concept paper to prospective participants and seeking their input to a paper that will set out the issues and questions for the colloquium itself. Two days of presentations and serious workshopping will lead to the drafting of an output paper that will include policy ideas for government and civil society

alike. There will also be action commitments by the participants.

The emotional and spiritual impact of the colloquium will be as important as the intellectual work. We want participants to have an experience that will touch their hearts as well as their heads. An important outcome will be increased understanding that the

spiritual dimension of human life cannot be ignored in policy making. This, we believe, will be an important move towards achieving the primary goal of external affairs as given us by the Universal House of Justice: influencing processes towards world peace.

The Office of External Affairs is working on this in partnership with the Office for the Advancement of Women and the Association for Bahá'í Studies (English-speaking Europe). Public Information Carmel Momen, our National Public Information Representative, has worked hard to prepare the way for suitable media coverage of the opening of the Terraces. The opening events may not have made the headlines on the Ten O'clock News or in the national dailies, but the whole project will be of interest to feature writers in magazines and the specialist media.

The Office of Public Information in Haifa drew our attention to the miracle that we are witnessing. In the days of the Blessed Beauty the mountain was barren, unappealing and without significance. His Tablet of Carmel set in motion a vast process of transformation and we now see the mountain's splendour unveiled.

Bahá'u'lláh gave Mount Carmel a voice, bidding her to "Call out to Zion . and announce the joyful tidings: He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come!"

As OPI's guidance says: "By telling the story of the Terraces, we are amplifying the voice of the mountain and carrying out Bahá'u'lláh's wish when He stated, 'Oh, how I long to announce to every spot on the surface of the earth, and to carry to each one of its cities, the glad tidings of this Revelation.'"

Let's give the mountain her voice as we tell all and sundry about Gardens and Terraces as a symbol of hope for humanity and an expression of belief in our collective and peaceful future.

Committees and Departments  

Committee for International Pioneering and Travel Teaching

The National Spiritual Assembly of Papua New Guinea has received a letter from the Waligi Local Spiritual Assemblies in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea, asking about the possibility of finding Bahá'í doctors to fill vacancies in a hospital in their area. The hospital is located in Balimo and run by Asia Pacific Christian Mission. In their letter they mention three positions that are currently vacant in the hospital and suggest that it may be possible for a pioneer to fill one of them.

If any suitably qualified friends are interested in pioneering, please could they respond directly to the National Spiritual Assembly of Papua New Guinea (and at the same time inform the CIPTT of their interest). It would be important to determine the physical reality of this pioneer post and obviously details of the expertise required during initial deliberations to ensure that the friend's know what to expect before choosing this pioneer post.

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Papua New Guinea, email: nsapng@datec.com.pg

The Committee for International Pioneering & Travel Teaching, UK (CIPTT) announces the launching of its new website, where as well as being kept up to date about current calls and top priority countries around the world requiring pioneers and travel teachers, you will also find listings of ongoing overseas projects such as schools and other social and economic development projects, a calendar of planned summer and winter schools in the UK and elsewhere, information about forthcoming Teaching Projects, stories, news, letters and adverts, the CIPTT application form for pioneering or travel teaching, and a host of other related materials.

It is our hope that both prospective and existing pioneers and travel teachers, as well as

It is our hope that both prospective and existing pioneers and travel teachers, as well as anyone wishing to keep up to date with CIPTT matters will find these pages useful. We welcome your contributions to many of these pages and hope that the site will be a true reflection of our cultural and geographical diversity and of our unified vision for growth at the same time as being useful, inspirational, participative, and interesting.

The CIPTT Website is at <http://www.bahai.org.uk/pioneers/>

We will give you more information about the website content in the next edition of the Journal. If you can't access the website, or if you want any information about Pioneering or travel teaching, or details about the many teaching projects and summer schools that we have information on, please contact the Secretary: Peymane Adab, Email: <mailto:cipitt@bahai.org.uk>

Committee for International Pioneering and Travel Teaching

Thelma Batchelor (Secretary): <mailto:batchelor@clara.net>

Barbara Winner: <mailto:winners@zetnet.co.uk>

Committees and Departments 

Bahá'í Agency for Social and Economic Development (UK)

SMILE: A SED project in Dover

How many of us, using an introductory Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) course taken over ten years ago, would start teaching? Well, some people in Kent did with a project called SMILE (Support Me in Learning English).

It all started in July 1999 with a desperate need to be doing something useful for asylum seekers in Dover. Deborah and Genevieve Burnett began English classes in a church hall offered to them by the United Reform Minister. Initially they did not mention the fact that they were Bahá'ís, but their identity was gradually discovered and, instead of being frowned upon, people reacted positively because the majority of Christian clergy in the area were not prepared to be involved. However, according to some, being a Bahá'í must also mean being 'nuts', because who else would drive 30 miles to teach and befriend asylum seekers?

Anyway, butterflies in stomachs were soon controlled and classes proceeded very well. But being a teacher is hard (any teacher can tell you that, but at least they know their classes). Imagine never knowing who, or how many students would show up for your class. Not to mention the fact of keeping everybody occupied for 2 hours! No wonder that the break with juice and biscuits soon became the main focal point. However, over time, frightened and tense people started to relax, make eye contact, and SMILE.

Special efforts were made to teach whole families, so that no one, old or young, would be left behind and remain dependent on English-speaking family members. The added benefit of family teaching is also the avoidance of all kinds of bureaucracy related to dealing with children when their parents aren't present.

To Deborah and many of the other SMILE volunteers, asylum seekers have become more than just some figures in the news. They have become real friends and their newly learnt knowledge of English might help them anywhere in the world.

Anyone wanting more information or advice on starting similar SMILE projects can contact Deborah by email: <mailto:Debngen@btinternet.com>.

BASED (UK)

Susan Howard (Secretary): <mailto:secretariat@baseduk.org>, Fax: 01235 533278

Committees and Departments 

Year of Service Desk

Here is a list of just some of the YOS opportunities available

Albania

1. Teaching and consolidation activities in villages and towns throughout Albania
2. Teaching and supporting the Bahá'í Cultural Centre
3. Assisting with the Mobile Institute

Australia

Year of service projects in Australia include:

1. Fred Murray Service Project.
2. Australian House of Worship Project. Positions are available for Youth Year of Service participants at the Australian House of Worship, in Sydney: Youth Desk of the National Spiritual Assembly; Specialist Assistant to the Executive Secretary - External Affairs; Assistant to Property Manager; Assistance to the Director of the Office for Education
3. Collis Featherstone Teaching/Service Project. Communities in which youth could offer a year of service and assist to maintain the momentum of teaching work through-out the year.
4. Diversity Dance Theatre of Australia Project.

Azerbaijan

1. Assist with teaching and consolidation of new Bahá'í communities and developing youth activities.
2. Musa Banani Teaching Project

Bahá'í World Centre - Haifa, Israel

Service at the World Centre - Please contact the Bahá'í National Centre for forms to be completed. These are then sent directly to the office of personnel at the World Centre.

Bahá'í International Community

1. Office of Public Information - Paris - Secretary/Year of Service. Secretarial work and layout of publications, organisation of public relations events.
2. Geneva United Nations Office - PC Network Support/ Secretarial Position

Bahamas

Lights of the Caribbean Teaching Project – on-going year round for summer and year of service youth.

Baltic States - Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania

1. Youth Workshops
2. Goal City Task Forces - teaching, community services, youth groups and projects
3. National Bahá'í Centres and community activities

Barbados

Teaching through the arts.

Belarus

1. Village Teaching
2. National Centre - office work in the secretariat, assisting with teaching activities, children's classes and youth activities.

Belgium

National Bahá'í Centre in Brussels will have two one-year posts (preferably starting Aug. 2001). Good knowledge of French and/or Dutch, knowledge of English and/or Ger- is available for up to two youth (of the same sex). Recommended budget: about US\$250/month (includes possible travelling-teaching costs every three months).

Belize

Service opportunities include:

1. Receptionist-Bahá'í teacher, possible caretaker for the Secretariat office in Belize City
2. Permanent Teaching Project to hold home visits, assist with community development activities, youth activities, children's classes, a children's choir, or children's activities.

Benin

Brilliant Stars International School (a private, Bahá'í owned English-speaking school for students 2-13 years old).

Bolivia

1. Radio Bahá'í Bolivia

2. The "Raul Pavon" Mass Teaching Project
3. School in the community of Puca Puca
4. Mobile Permanent Teaching Project of Santa Cruz
5. Teaching Project Around Lago Titicaca
6. Service at the National Office
7. The Dorothy Baker environmental Studies Centre
8. The Foundation for the Integral Development of Bolivia
9. ARCO Project
10. Nur University - Higher Education and Service to the Faith; Professional Service and Service to the Faith

Year of Service Desk

Sylvia Miley (Secretary): <mailto:yosd@cix.co.uk>

Esmyr Koomen (e-mail coordinator): <mailto:yosdesk@koomen.demon.co.uk>

Jonneke Koomen (youth advisor): <mailto:jonneke@koomen.demon.co.uk>

Special article: "Youth CAN change the world" (YOS stories)