

REPORT ON FEBRUARY INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

LONG BEACH SUPPORT COUNTRY DIRECTORS MEETING

A meeting was held of the Support Country Directors with the President, Tom Houston, at the Breakers Hotel, Long Beach from Sunday evening, 23rd February to mid-afternoon, Wednesday, 26th February. Bill Newell (chairman) (World Vision of Canada), Bill Kliewer (World Vision US), Harold Henderson, Peter McNee (World Vision of New Zealand) and Manfred Kohl (World Vision of Germany) were present for the whole time. Tom and I arrived in time for the Monday morning start, and Dr Engstrom arrived on Tuesday morning.

The meeting was initiated by Bill Newell and encouraged in the early stage by Bill Kliewer and Dr Ted. Given the depth of feeling that I had encountered in Canada and the US about the parlous state of the partnership I agreed with the need for dialogue. I was not alone.

We worked our way through the book of Ephesians during our three days with more than an hour being taken each morning for reflection on two chapters. On Monday, in fact, we spent the entire morning in meditation, prayer, discussion and investigation in Ephesians.

We each shared our expectations for the meeting. They were as follows:

Harold – To recognize that we have a crisis within the partnership in which the international office has taken a more dominant role than was originally intended. To discuss actions which might be initiated and time frames for those actions.

Philip – To review, challenge and agree on the values, norms, beliefs, principles and attitudes on which our partnership is based. And to covenant to affirm, preach, teach and model those values.

Bill Newell – To deal with a couple of issues (unspecified) and on the actions required.

Peter – His concern is the quality of our field ministry. He hoped we might find ways in which donors and receivers could be brought more closely together.

Manfred – To participate in a forum in which support office directors could speak openly and frankly. He hoped that these meetings would be regular.

Tom – To know what's going on from the support office directors' point of view. To discuss the need for ongoing communication to avoid hopping from solution to crisis (this being how he perceived our recent history together).

Bill Kliewer – 1. That the environment in the meeting will allow us to talk about what is best versus what is merely expedient for the fulfilment of our mission, and,

2. To try to identify the (ideal(implied)) components and functions of our global team and leadership, and,

3. To agree on a plan of action and dates for implementation.

It is probably fair to say that no-one's stated expectations were met, save perhaps for Tom's. Certainly we did not agree in a significant way on a plan of action and a schedule for its implementation. Of course, the group had no actual authority for such an outcome, but one might have forecast that such a group would have developed something substantial for the IAC to consider.

The meeting fell quite a bit short of my own hopes. In fact, although there was quite a lot of talk about beliefs, there was much more skirting around the issue (beating around the bush, one might say). A lot of statements which began "we ought to...", might more productively have begun "I believe

that...". This might have encouraged better exchange. Indeed, my observation was that it took us until the middle of Day 2 before someone made a belief statement that was challenged. I do not believe that this was because of a unanimity of views prior to that point, but rather a profound reluctance or inability to clearly articulate our beliefs.

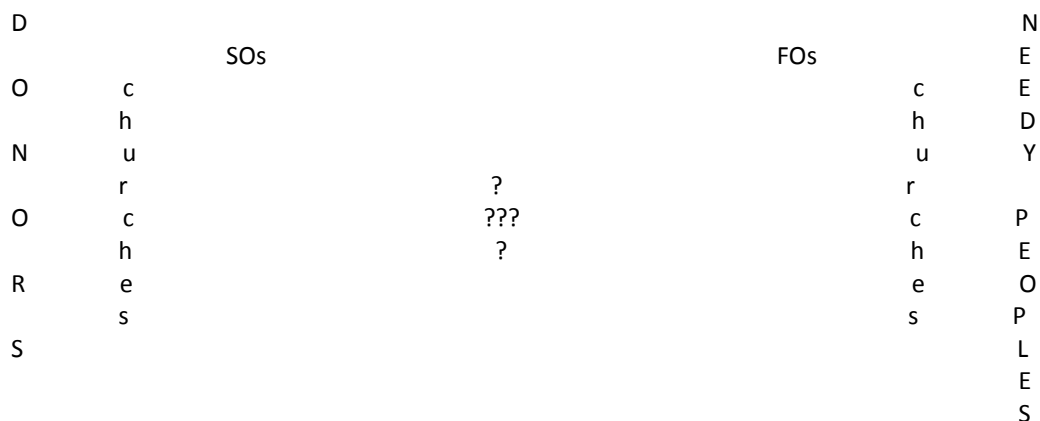
During the week, especially as we started to discuss the behind-the-by-laws-issue, many others expressed the desire that we "get to the root issues" or the "issues behind". Ironically, it was often those who made such speeches who seemed the most reluctant, or unable, to say what those issues are. My conclusion, after reflection, is that we need help and guidance from an organisational behaviour specialist to recommend and/or lead us through activities which will help us to articulate and challenge our beliefs. Perhaps this can be done at the council meeting.

During the meeting, Tom presented a spoken resume of what had happened in the ten months since the support office directors had last met (April '85). He spoke frankly about his own performance, his evaluation of the vice presidents and other staff, and a brief word about the Claremont project.

The meeting was intended to be relatively free of agenda and discussion ranged over a wide variety of topics, including:

- international office/support office relationships;
- leadership styles appropriate for CEO positions;
- primacy - funds first, quality of field ministry, or a balance;
- field autonomy and the "franchise" concept
- corporate culture and its communication to new generations;
- parts of a global team
 - strategic framework (purpose)
 - appropriate division of labour
 - interdependent with...
 - accepted leadership
 - agreement on plans
 - solid relationships
 - effective communication
 - accountability - what does it mean?

At one stage Tom presented a diagram of the partnership as follows:



The question for the future was, what, in ideal terms, needed to be in the middle. I suggested that the middle needed to consist of:

1. A structure

with mechanisms for strategic framework formulation and communication;

eg., franchise,

and effective delegation to the support offices and field offices;

eg., Large Scale Development owned by support offices and field offices. Delegation would involve doing/risking delegation.

2. An attitude of mind, a management style

eg., planning on the basis that this is something managers do, rather than something that a planner does. They do it because a central planner encourages, facilitates.

It's a servant attitude - staff to the line.

Whether this exists now seems to be a matter of differing opinions. Probably the international office sees itself as doing all this to the extent that they might be thought of as the "saviours of the partnership". This difference of opinion came into focus in one discussion in which the presidential role vis-a-vis the support office directors was described as *primus inter pares* (first among equals). Others said that this was not correct. Rather the president was merely equal – not lesser, nor greater. One suggested that the role was similar to the minister/elders relationship in some churches (minister is chief, pastor, and servant). One suggested that some at the international office behave as if the president is "primus" only. As usual, one humorist emerged to suggest that perhaps the president and/or the international office were sometimes "last among equals" or "equal among firsts"!

Although there was discussion about the international office, there was also frequent clarifications that the "problem" was not one of international office performance. Rather it was a problem of global partnership identity. It was not so much that the international office was doing a bad job, the question being asked was "Are they/we doing the correct jobs?" Regrettably, this difference was not clearly communicated later in the week at the IAC meeting. In any case, I suspect that for international office colleagues it might have smacked of rationalisation.

Another belief which was surfaced and challenged without resolution was "Is there such a thing as a global World Vision entity?" At least one support office director declared that there is not, there is only a collection of separate autonomous entities. Another said that the partnership would not begin to work properly until we achieved "a genuine sense of shared responsibility".

There was a common belief that the fields needed to be represented better, and a feeling that the Bylaws committee is heading in a good direction. There was also consensus that there needed to be some way of locating common ownership in some partnership body. The "apt-to-be-cumbersome" Council might be the place, and the elected Board might work, but there was at least one expression that the proposal was risky and dangerous.

There was talk of a "study". Frankly this wasn't altogether clear to me and I asked if "another Frank Edwards" study was being called for. The answer was a definite "No!" The thought was that the "new" Council might somehow take ownership for a thoroughgoing worldwide review of the partnership. Even now, I don't see how this works pragmatically, and later at the IAC there was no opportunity for this proposal to be effectively developed.

There was a common feeling that the Claremont project continued to be viewed unfavourably by the majority of non-international office people. The group felt that it was probably in the partnership's best interests not to be pressing ahead with the project, especially if the investment could be recovered. Realizing that abandonment of Claremont might throw open the international office location question again, opinions were expressed about the ideal location.

Later at the IAC it was stated, without challenge, that the research done to date clearly and unarguably demonstrated that Claremont continued to be the partnership's best option. At the Long Beach meeting the opinion was that the research on the "non-economic factors" had been missing or inadequate. These "non-economic factors" included an evaluation of the opportunity cost of having the international office located in Southern California (eg., income foregone in (say) Germany, cost of dealing with negative aspects of US-image outside of US (support and field countries) compared with the cost of dealing in the US with having an international office some other place).

The support office directors tried to make the point that the facility issue (Claremont) is separate from the location issue, but this distinction proved to be a fine one when the matter came before the IAC.

There was some desire (expressed mostly by Manfred) to have more of these support office directors meetings. Clearly there is a problem with the international office Vice Presidents perception of such meetings, however. At least one spoke of being offended by not being invited. An attempt was made to suggest that such meetings merely replaced the everyday contact that international office Vice Presidents have with Tom, but given the proximity of the meeting to the IAC, and the tendency for the support office directors to "prepare their case" for the IAC, such explanations are, at best, weak.

Tom's intention is for such a meeting to be held six monthly and for there to be more regular tele-conferences with support office directors. Whether this intention will be modified by international office Vice Presidents' opposition remains to be seen. At least one support office director felt that some of the matters discussed were a waste of time, but there was general affirmation that non-agenda meetings would be very helpful in maintaining healthy relationships and therefore a healthy partnership.

AT THE IAC MEETING

The IAC meeting followed on Thursday and Friday.

FY86 FIELD OPERATIONS REVIEW

The Regional Vice Presidents and the Large Scale Development Vice President presented reports which are attached. I recommend this information be shared widely with your staff.

SPONSORSHIP

The outcome was very disappointing to me. The Task Force has been maintained as a group to evaluate the sponsorship tests being done by Britain, US and New Zealand. This is good.

However, the issue of quality was not addressed head on, in my view. I accept some responsibility for this and regret that I did not communicate the depth of the problem, and our keenness for a solution. Dr Ted also commented on the quality issue and in the end a general statement was made to the effect that we needed to maintain high quality. It was not clear to me that this meant anything in practical terms. There was clearly some confusion about quality in field ministry as opposed to quality in sponsor servicing and I was sad to find the discussion at one point degenerating into a sponsor versus good ministry debate. Once again, I felt I had failed to communicate the worth of sponsorship and the vision that some of us continue to hold for sponsorship as a powerful tool for transformation of both child and sponsor.

One thing we need to avoid doing is giving the impression that we are advocating the status quo in sponsorship. While our speeches continue to be about "getting existing sponsorship right" we might be misunderstood as standing in the way of new ideas in sponsorship. We might be wiser, and communicate more effectively, if World Vision of Australia were to determine for itself what actions would need to be taken in order for us to believe we have an effective sponsorship program. Having done that we could then present it as a "new" sponsorship offer. In the present environment, it might receive more attention, and would at least put our problem on the Sponsorship Task Force's agenda. Otherwise, I am not sure where the quality problems will get addressed.

JAPAN

This was not dealt with, owing to Dr Ted's absence from part of the meeting. I have only one comment on further reflection. It seems that World Vision US is developing Japan in a reporting relationship to the WVI Board. This is proper, but I wonder if World Vision US really ought to be accountable to the IAC itself for performance. The Board has given the go-ahead on Japan: should this rather be done on the recommendation of the IAC? I think so, and would have appreciated the view of the IAC on the matter.

Given our experience in Hong Kong versus Europe, I wonder whether it is a wise course to appoint a representative (even an acting one) in Japan. I think we should send a World Vision person to live there for a year. S/he does not have to be the director, although the director, if a local, should report to this World Vision person. Only by having day-to-day contact with someone who knows World Vision intimately can we guarantee secure support office development consistent with the beliefs and value systems and according to the standards of the partnership.

MARC EUROPE

The minutes will reveal that we agreed to fund this operation through FY86 and indicated the intention to fund it on a reducing scale for the next 3 years. The point was made, and generally agreed to, that MARC ministries ought to be seen as part of the support (or field) ministries. "Ownership" of MARC Europe by the European support offices is, in my view, essential. In the absence of World Vision of Europe, the suggestion had been made that the partnership fund MARC Europe. I feel that this is only acceptable if we fund it on the basis of a subsidy to one or more of the European support offices because they are not able to meet the full costs of their own ministries.

My opinion is that the contribution-to-WVI position of a support office is distorted by hiving off certain ministries as funded-by-international. When that ministry has, as MARC Europe does, such clear benefit to the support ministries undertaken in Europe (and especially Britain) it begins to look like a device to gain easier entry into full support office status.

OTHER MATTERS

- Africa Drought Project Evaluation;
- Large Scale Development report;
- Ministry Mix;
- World Vision's relationships with Governments;
- Eritrea (an excellent paper - worth reading for historical briefing, although conclusions not universally sustained at IAC);
- Laos and Vietnam;
- Kampuchea;
- US Foreign Policy;
- Marketing Function Paper;
- Claremont (a motion to recommend withdrawal from the project was itself withdrawn when it was clear the issue was severely polarizing);
- IO Model/Offshore Study (an interesting and revolutionary study "The Future International Office" is available from me);
- Partnership Management Plans;
- WVE/WVG Written Report;
- Future of MARC;
- Perth Report/Bylaws Review;
- Council Theme and Process;
- Field Director's Conference;
- International Institutes;
- Long Range Leadership Development Strategy;
- Project Ratification Definition (accepted);
- Project Approval (done);
- Special Funding Resolution.

The discussion surrounding the Bylaws and the Perth Report is covered in a separate report.

Other issues on the agenda will be noted in the forthcoming minutes and the background reading is available from my office for anyone interested.