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BERNARD FRASER'S MEMOIRS

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B. H. Fraser

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Having been a generalist during my first four and a half years with UNICEF (see earlier dictations), I became a specialist in February of 1953 when Maurice Pate asked me to take over governmental fund-raising functions. I succeeded Mrs. Betty Jacobs in that work. As I recall, she had apparently been too aggressive in the pursuit of her tasks, and one of the lessons learned immediately was that an international civil servant should not deal directly with parliamentary bodies but work only through the executive branches of governments, even in the country of which the fund-raiser is a national. So strong was the resentment in the U.S Congress that Congressman Taber (R), of Auburn, NY, who was then the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, had great reservations about UNICEF. It was only through a network of contacts that Maurice Pate was finally able to meet Mr. Taber at a bridge party, and the rift was more or less healed. Certainly it remains important that contacts with parliamentarians by UNICEF staff members should only be arranged, either with the approval or at least knowledge of the pertinent government department. Even if there are contacts on a personal basis, such as visits to or by legislators known privately, discretion is advisable.

Fund-raising is a fascinating task even in its routine aspects, and there was hardly ever a dull moment in 23 years for me. The challenging aspect of it all was, of course, that UNICEF was new, and there were no precedents as guidelines for raising funds. Only as UNICEF's work became gradually known was it possible to cite accomplishments and solicit funds for further work.

And so it was that the number of governments gradually increased from 30 in 1950 to 100 in 1962 and some 135 by 1976. The aim throughout those years was to expand the ranks of donor governments so that UNICEF could claim wide international support (though one could not speak of universal support). In other words, over a period of two decades a basis was laid for contributions from governments on a regular annual basis. When governments had come to accept it as an item in their annual budgets, thereafter our effort was concentrated on lifting the amounts involved to higher levels.

If there is any other phase which merits recognition in the annals of UNICEF fund-raising, is the gradual decrease in the relative support by the U.S. Government. In its first several years the U.S. share in total government contributions was approximately 70 percent, even 71.3 percent in 1952. It was just about that time when I remember that Senator William Knowland (R) of California (whom Pate had known through his Hoover association), had paid a visit to Maurice Pate who, standing at the door to bid him farewell, said "and make it 70 percent matching!". But by 1954 a process of diminishing participation began from 60 percent downward each year to 40 percent by 1964 and eventually to 25 percent. This was not very popular in UNICEF circles, and I remember that I was asked by someone whether I was working for UNICEF or for the U.S. Government.

Support for our efforts was great from the staff in the field though occasionally some doubts were raised about our aims. Off and on someone would ask why assisted countries should also be contributors. Attached is a copy of a memo which I wrote to Mr. Charnow in 1968 setting forth our views on that subject. Pate held that it would be better if countries gave us money

rather than see them spend what they had on arms or for other purposes less essential in his view. There were also some personal reactions by those who did not want to be pressed, and one field representative extended his best wishes for my retirement in 1968, several months before the date when that would have come to pass and which actually did not come to pass until eight years later, obviously he was annoyed. A "professional beggar" cannot be popular with everybody, but I always had the backing of the two Executive Directors, perhaps because I saved them from the need to press harder in the cases with which I was concerned.

It was unavoidable that I would become identified with fund-raising among delegaces and others outside UNICEF, the late P. J. Tsao, representing the Republic of China (Taiwan) and a delightful person, would tell me - whenever he saw me and even before we would shake hands - what the latest situation was regarding a contribution from his government, usually that it would take more time.

When Harry Labouisse became the Executive Director in 1965 he asked me whether it was not so that governments would give us money if they saw that we needed it. I told him that one could never take that for granted and one would have to run scared all the time. Some years later, and perhaps I had been too pressing, he referred to me at a staff meeting as the fellow "who prods gently with a sharp knife". I used my knife more carefully thereafter. It was a pleasure to work with Harry Labouisse as much as it had earlier been with Maurice Pate, and one looked upon it all as a privilege to work for UNICEF. Certainly the spirit of that time was inspiring, notwithstanding some difficult situations which naturally arise anywhere.

One difficult aspect, from a fund-raising point of view, was that UNICEF reached a stage at one time when it did not need much more money. In the 1950's financial procedures were such that the utilization of resources was slow. There were many dormant allocations, and eventually changes were made to put funds to more rapid use. It was in 1961 that the Executive Office advised the Paris office that "...we have no reason to stimulate fund-raising for UNICEF just now...". Such a stand was no doubt valid under the circumstances at that time, but fund-raising was not always a high priority.

Until 1968 at least I was the only staff member concerned entirely with fund-raising, along with one secretary, but even during those years some other chores unrelated to fund-raising had to be performed.

It took a great effort to interest the front office in special contributions, there was little inclination to consider this field seriously, and when attention was paid, it came reluctantly. Attached is a three-page memo which I wrote on April 1958, and there were probably others at earlier times in which I pressed for more favorable consideration of contributions for specific projects, certainly by the public sector. By 1959 an effort was begun to stimulate interest in contributions for specific projects by governments, and while this is common undertaking now, it was unusual and a pioneering job at that time. Attached is a large sheet in which I presented the various aspects. Gradually the concept took hold, first through a participation in Freedom from Hunger Campaign in Australia and New Zealand and later elsewhere.

The opportunity to present new ideas, even if they were not adopted, was one of the rewarding phases of fund-raising work. There was for instance an idea presented in February 1953 to create a UNICEF calendar project for which UNICEF, however, was not ready until a number of years later. Then there was the plan to enlist the understanding and support of youth in the work of UNICEF through the United Nations Children's Fraternity (copy dated June 1960 attached); I recall that Maurice Pate sent it to Sir Herbert Broadley in London who replied that in England there were no fraternities.

There were also some ideas reaching us which had to be turned down. One was an informal proposal by a Deputy Director -- made at the time when the USSR fostered its Troika plans in the UN -- for UNICEF to have a committee of three staff members to deal with fund-raising work.

It must have been in late 1964 when Maurice Pate asked me to draft for him in short form a paper outlining the tasks for the Executive Director as I perceived them. Apparently he had begun to have plans for his own retirement. In fact he mentioned to me that Dick Heyward was not interested in becoming his successor. My paper made the point, in essence, that the Executive Director could not gather financial support if he did not pay attention first to the quality of program work.

Maurice Pate passed away in 1965 and incidently, I may have been the last staff member to see him on that January day when I travelled down the elevator with him to discuss an idea in relation to the Australian National Committee.

More to come.