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**Henry R. LaBouisse, Former UNICEF Executive Dir., Dies. UNICEF Press Release from John Charnow, 26 March 1987.**

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CF/HIST/IC/87-02  
26 March 1987

TO: UNICEF Staff members at Headquarters  
FROM: <sup>IC.</sup> John Charnow, UNICEF History Project

SUBJECT: HENRY R. LABOUISSSE, FORMER UNICEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DIES

Henry Richardson Labouisse, former Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, died of cancer at Memorial Hospital in New York City last night. He was 83 years old.

Mr. Labouisse had a long and distinguished career in international social and economic affairs, culminating in his leadership of UNICEF from 1965 to 1979. During his tenure, UNICEF grew from a humanitarian junior partner in the UN system of organizations to a fully-fledged member of the international development community, stressing the importance of investment in children as a prerequisite for human development, social or economic.

Present Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. James P. Grant, said: "Harry Labouisse contributed so much towards making the world a better place for all of us, especially for our children. He provided a lifetime of dedicated leadership. It was first my privilege to know him and to rely upon his guidance when I served as his Deputy in 1961 in the creation of USAID, and to follow his career and look to him for leadership in the years since. I shall miss his counsel in the years ahead. We shall all miss his friendship and vision, but we shall not be without his legacy."

Mr. Labouisse was known by all who served with him for his integrity and sense of justice, his acute analytical capacity and sound judgement, and his personal warmth and civility. When he retired from UNICEF, a senior colleague noted: "There is an almost instant direct human sympathy between him and the people he is talking to -- his simplicity and directness of expression, his readiness to listen to arguments and to change his mind, and at the same time, when it is a question of principle, then his readiness to defend it."

Born 11 February, 1904, in New Orleans, Mr. Labouisse graduated from Woodberry Forest School, Virginia, in 1922. He earned a B.A. degree from Princeton University in 1926 and a LL.B. from Harvard University Law School in 1929. He practiced law for 12 years in New York City with the firm of Taylor, Blanc, Capron and Marsh.

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After the outbreak of the Second World War, he entered public service, joining the Division of Defense Materials of the United States Government. He was appointed Counselor for Economic Affairs in the US Embassy in Paris in 1944 and later played a key role in setting up the Marshall Plan in Europe. He served as Chief of the Marshall Plan Special Mission to France from 1953 to 1954.

In 1954, U.N. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold appointed Mr. Labouisse Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was responsible for providing food, shelter, health services and education to some 900,000 refugees. By the time he left in 1958, the standard of living had improved generally throughout the camps, despite severe political and administrative tensions as well as insufficient funds, and UNRWA had managed to put in place an expanded programme of vocational training and develop a reservoir of goodwill for the organization in both the host countries and among the refugees themselves.

Mr. Labouisse became a consultant to the World Bank in 1959 and directed an economic survey of Venezuela, which included, for the first time in such studies, chapters on health and education. In the summer and fall of 1960, at Hammarskjold's request, he was granted a leave of absence by the Bank to serve as Special Adviser in U.N. efforts to contain the upheavals in the Congo (now Zaïre) following its independence.

Appointed by President Kennedy as Director of the United States International Co-operation Administration in 1961, Mr. Labouisse played a key role in the preparation of legislation which led to the establishment of the successor Agency for International Development (USAID). From 1962 to 1965 he served as Ambassador to Greece. He was appointed Executive Director of UNICEF by UN Secretary-General U Thant on 1 June 1965, following the death earlier that year of the organization's first Executive Director, Maurice Pate.

In his first address to the UNICEF Executive Board, in June 1965, Mr. Labouisse said: "This renewal of my association with the practical work of the United Nations does not solely represent to me an interesting and challenging post. It also expresses my faith in the United Nations as an organization, as an irreplaceable 'way of life' for the peoples of the world." He profoundly believed in active co-operation between the affluent, industrialized world and the newly-independent developing countries.

UNICEF was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965. In his acceptance speech, Mr. Labouisse stressed that the award's most important meaning was "the solemn recognition that the welfare of today's children is inseparably linked with the peace of tomorrow's world... The longer the world tolerates the slow war of attrition which poverty and ignorance now wage against 800 million children in the developing countries, the more likely it becomes that our hope for lasting peace will be the ultimate casualty."

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In a world where political tensions often threatened to derail international social and humanitarian initiatives, Harry Labouisse was deeply committed to keeping the issue of children's well-being firmly above the political battlefield. UNICEF had established since its creation a tradition of non-partisan relief to children and mothers in distress on both sides of civil conflict. The war in the Indochina peninsula, and the Nigerian civil war, were two of the most testing experiences for humanitarian action in the post-colonial world. Labouisse's quiet diplomacy enabled UNICEF to aid children and mothers wherever they happened to be, even when they were outside the control of internationally recognized States.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, UNICEF became much more involved in longer-term development efforts for children, considerably enlarging the scope and strengthening the effectiveness of its operations. An approach to "basic" or community-based services for children was introduced which embraced health, safe water, nutrition, education and women's programmes and which emphasized self-help by people and communities, linked to government services for necessary support.

In the mid-1970s, Mr. Labouisse led UNICEF to join with the World Health Organization (WHO) in the development and promotion of the primary health care strategy involving a reorientation of the conventional pattern of health services to reach the large mass of underserved people, especially in the developing countries. These joint efforts received a major impetus in 1978 with the WHO/UNICEF-sponsored Conference at Alma Ata, USSR, where Ministers of Health and senior health officials of some 140 countries accepted primary health care as the principal means of achieving "Health for All by the Year 2000."

In 1979, the last year of Mr. Labouisse's tenure, the UN General Assembly made UNICEF the lead agency worldwide for the "International Year of the Child." Generating a degree of interest in the well-being of their children in many countries far exceeding original expectations, the year led to broader UNICEF advocacy and involvement on issues affecting children, nationally and internationally.

In September 1979, UNICEF, working with the International Committee of the Red Cross on relief operations in Kampuchea, was designated "lead agency" of the United Nations system for this effort, an emergency operation as complex as any in the United Nations' history. Mr. Labouisse brought his very special experience to this intricate and internationally sensitive situation, and helped guide the massive international relief effort in the last months before his retirement.

Mr. Labouisse travelled extensively in the more than 100 countries where UNICEF was providing assistance. His happiest moments were spent in the field, going from village to village with local people and UNICEF staff members, gaining first-hand knowledge of the impact of the organization's work and also of the inevitable difficulties and shortcomings. During Mr. Labouisse's stewardship, UNICEF income from governments and private contributions increased from \$33 million in 1965 to more than \$250 million in 1979.

For some six years following his retirement from UNICEF, Mr. Labouisse served as Chairman of the Board of the American Farm School, a vocational training center for Greek rural youth in Thessaloniki with which he had become acquainted while serving as US Ambassador. In appreciation of his involvement, the school is building the Henry R. Labouisse Youth Center -- a gymnasium and multi-purpose recreation facility. He was also a member, and had been a Director, of the Council on Foreign Relations. He was a trustee of the Clark Foundation in New York and served on several other Boards, including those of the Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown, New York, the New York State Historical Association, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and Helen Keller International.

Mr. Labouisse was the recipient of a number of awards and honorary degrees, including the Ralph Bunche Award in 1976, the Helen Keller International Award in 1977 and the Woodrow Wilson Award of Princeton University in 1978. This latter award is presented each year by the institution to an alumnus "in recognition of distinguished achievement in the Nation's service."

Mr. Labouisse was first married to Elizabeth Scriven Clark, who died in 1945. He had one daughter, Anne, and four grandchildren: David Farnsworth, Lisa Farnsworth, Jesse Peretz and Eugenia Peretz. In 1954, he married Eve Curie, the youngest daughter of the scientists Pierre and Marie Curie, an author and journalist. He is survived by his wife, his daughter (Mrs. Martin Peretz of Cambridge, Mass.) and by his four grandchildren.

Interment in the family tomb in New Orleans will be private. A memorial service will be held at The Church of The Holy Trinity, 316 East 88th Street, New York, on 2 April at 11 a.m. .

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be sent to the United States Committee for UNICEF, 331 East 38th Street, N.Y. 10016, or to the New York office of the American Farm School, 850 Third Avenue, N.Y. 10022.

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