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Interview with Adelaide Sinclair\*

Conducted by Jack Charnow in Ottawa, Ontario

17-18 November 1982\*

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\* Adelaide Sinclair died during the night of 18-19 November 1982, at the age of 82. The following is an excerpt from Interoffice Memorandum of James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, to all UNICEF staff, dated 19 November 1982:

Mrs. Sinclair, who devoted her life to public service, had been associated with UNICEF almost from the inception of our organization. She served as Canada's representative to the UNICEF Executive Board from 1946 to 1956, during which period she became the first woman to serve as Chairman of the Board (1951-1952) and earlier guided the deliberations of the Programme Committee as its chairman. In 1957 she became a member of the UNICEF staff as Deputy Executive Director for Programmes, in which post she served until her retirement in 1967. Adelaide Sinclair had a very distinguished career of public service with the Canadian Government before she joined UNICEF. Among the many posts she held was that of executive assistant to Canada's Deputy Minister of Welfare. She received many honorary degrees and awards. These included the Medal of Service of the Order of Canada and the Order of the British Empire for her services during the war as Director of the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service.



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### The inception of UNICEF

J.C. Adelaide, would you say something about how you first heard about UNICEF and how you got involved in it and what there was about your background and previous experience which made the Canadian Government think you were okay for UNICEF.

#### The Canadian government view

A. S. They didn't care a hoot, just as long as they got a body that would take the thing off them. They weren't interested at all, Jack. They were not in favor of this thing being started at all on the basis that Rajchman was arguing. They had other things and the UN was very exciting and full of big opportunities and everything. To put in this extra sort of little thing they felt was a kind of a waste of time perhaps. So they opposed it. They gave it no support whatever in the debates. However, I think they abstained. You can check that. It got through almost by default because certain people weren't going to say they were against children, but they certainly weren't going to pull for this to happen.

#### Rajchman's role

And then there were other people who thought it wasn't a bad idea or who thought Rajchman had a point, which indeed he had, of course, and so the thing went through. Then they proceeded to elect members to the UNICEF Board and they were careful to put on a number of countries which had money and that might be shamed into giving something if they were on the Board when the existing UNRRA money ran out. They said UNRRA was going to stop shipping at the end of that season. Rajchman wanted left-over UNRRA money kept available for a children's fund until such time as it could raise some money of its own. He said if you don't, the children are going to starve in Europe because Europe knows how to grow food but they can't get back and grow enough food now for this autumn. He was perfectly right about that, but not everybody was prepared to listen to him and to the kind of thing he wanted.

#### Sinclair appointed Canadian Board representative

So when the UNICEF resolution was finally passed and when Canada was elected to the Board we then had to at least make a show of appearing at the meetings. They considered that this was below the dignity of a serious foreign officer and so they tossed it over to George Davidson, who was the Deputy Administrator of Welfare and my boss in the Department of Health and Welfare and said, 'Well look, we don't know anything about this sort of thing and we are not really very much in favor of it and we certainly don't have the time to go to the meetings and so on. You will have to send somebody from your

department.' And I came back from a weekend away at the end of the year and George came into my office and he said, 'I'm afraid I've wished something on you while you were away, I hope you won't mind.' I said, 'You sound like as though I'd mind like anything! What's the trouble?'

J. C. You were in Health and Welfare at that time?

A. S. Oh yes, I had been working for George, for, well not for very long because I hadn't been out of the Navy for very long, but I was asked to go in as his assistant and it was really just to do anything that he didn't have time to do, and we were just getting into the children's family allowances and all sorts of things like that - anything that came on my desk I was supposed to find out about it and handle it. So he said there was this organization being set up at the UN because of this Polish intervention, or something of the kind, and we've been elected to the Board and External doesn't want to be bothered with it but they thought we should provide a delegate and he said, 'I'm on the ECOSOC and I really can't be away any more than that requires.' And somebody else, one of the medical people, was on the drug commission. And he said, 'I didn't have anybody else to send, so I just said you would go.' So it was no great tribute to me at all. He said, 'It might be interesting for you to see the UN and how it's developing and what it's like and everything. You'll have to go down to New York there for meetings and so on,' and so I said, 'Alright, I'll be good. I'll go.' I think quite a lot of them rued the day! I don't mean George, particularly, but External. They got a little tired of me at times.

J. C. Had Canada been active in UNRRA and did they think that the emergency was over in Europe? How did they feel about the end of UNRRA?

A. S. Well I don't think they felt about it at all. No, we hadn't been active in UNRRA, although I suppose we made a modest contribution. Of course Rajchman was so right. I mean if you stopped it in the autumn, nobody could pick up and get stuff there that often. He said, 'Those children will starve this winter because there isn't that food in Europe yet. By next year there may be,' and so it was unanswerable and the dramatic thing, as far as I was concerned I went down to my first meeting (I didn't know what international meetings were all about) and Katherine Lenroot was there, Rajchman was the Chairman, Maurice Pate had been appointed the Executive Director and there was an assortment of people that I didn't know from a bale of hay.

Lack of instructions

I had no instructions because nobody gave a hoot, you know, to give me any instructions - it was really more fun that they didn't because I made up my own.

J. C. After UNICEF got started and was getting money and getting out

supplies and all the rest, did the attitude of the Canadian Government change any? That is, External or Health and Welfare? Or were you really UNICEF in Canada and nobody else gave a hoot?

A. S. At the beginning, I think. Yes, because I telephoned and asked for instructions. I presumed that was what I was supposed to do. I mean, George got instructions before he went to ECOSOC and you know a lot of other people that I knew did. Jerry Ridell, who was head of that section in External at that time and whom I've known for ages (he was down at the UN for a while as our delegate, I think)...I said, 'We've got certain things to decide and I'd like some instructions to tell what our position is,' and he said, 'Adelaide, you know more about feeding children and everything else than we do...just use your head.' So for the first two or three years I had no instructions whatever and it was perfectly lovely, and I suddenly would find myself saying, 'The Canadian Government could not agree to that,' or, 'The Canadian Government would support that' or something, and then thinking, 'I must remember to tell them some time what we were doing. I tried to write them reports when I got home since I thought that was my business, and they almost begged me to stop because they hadn't time to read them. There was no interest at all to start with. They had a lot of other important things connected with the UN, there were many other things. You know they weren't an enormous department and as long as I minded my own business and so on, and then I began saying, 'You'd better give some money to this thing...You just can't sit there and be a member and not give money.' They said, 'Yes, yes, I suppose we will.' I don't mean there weren't individuals who were interested but I wouldn't say there was general interest in the department at all until it got a little farther on and then the reports were coming out and I kept them supplied with some things, and of course I knew a number of them quite well in the department so that I could call up and say things that, you know, under some conditions I couldn't have said. But it took quite a long time.

I don't blame them in one sense because they were all very terribly busy and this wasn't of paramount importance as far as they could see. And then the WHO delegates were chosen from our department - Health and Welfare - and that was helpful, of course, because they were interested in this too and would lend a little weight and support and whatnot.

#### Financing of UNICEF

##### UNRRA residuals

I remember at on the first Board meetings, we were sitting there and a young man with a rather sharp face came in and walked over to Rajchman and bent over the back of his chair and whispered something in his ear and Rajchman said, 'Well, you'll have to tell them.' Rajchman said alright and the young man said, 'How do you do' to Maurice and went out. Well this was the legal counsel of UNRRA whose

name happened to be Al Davidson. What he had come in to say was that they were having a board meeting of UNRRA and it had finally come to the conclusion that the balance of the funds should be made available to us at once as we were going into this business, because they wouldn't be in business to carry it on for the next year, and they had seen the light and how silly it was to stop the business before anybody else was ready to pick it up. That made it possible for UNICEF to start.

I've forgotten what the amount was, it doesn't sound like much nowadays, but it was enough so that orders could be placed. It was the same suppliers to go for the same programmes, and then that gave Maurice a whole year to get some staff together and to try to look at the thing and decide whether to go on just that way or not - before the money was finished and to raise more money.

Voluntary governmental contributions

- J. C. Adelaide, you know you talked about your WHO colleagues and, you know, WHO is financed on an assessed basis so there is no problem. I know that there had been some question in the origins of UNICEF as to whether it should be financed on an assessed basis or a voluntary basis and it turned out to be voluntary basis. Now, how did you see the difference between WHO on an assessed basis and your role in trying to convince the people to make a contribution to UNICEF. I'm talking about the principle of financing now.
- A. S. Well I think the work was different for us between the agencies and ourselves. I wouldn't have wanted UNICEF then to get onto an assessment basis because then you would have a ceiling and I think it was much better to be able to reach for the stars. Each government paid for their own delegate to go to the meetings and then they could be asked for money.

It became quite obvious that UNICEF couldn't go on being supported to a large extent by the United States, as UNRRA had been, not entirely but to a large extent, and I think that things sort of developed. It turned out that some countries were interested in making contributions and that kind of shamed the others a little bit into making contributions and then some of the countries that were benefiting from it made an effort to make contributions.

- J. C. I have always had the impression that the U.S. matching formula, which in the early days was quite generous, may have had its effect on the others, directly or indirectly.
- A. S. I think it was sensible. The U.S. had carried a big load for a long time, and there was no reason why they should go on doing it all the time if nobody else was going to participate. I think that was useful. It was a sort of cumulative thing. Once countries started giving, however modest to start with, they got into the habit. Then you could say to them, 'We need to increase that by at least 25% or

50% next year because the needs are so great.' It was a sort of a slow growth. Sometimes you got people who were more interested in that kind of thing in the department, but it was an uphill fight in a sense.

Canadian government position

- J. C. Were the decisions made mostly in the department or did you have to convince Finance or your budget people? Then did it go to the cabinet or what?
- A. S. Finance had to be in. I think External may have made suggestions to the other departments, Finance and others. If Finance said, 'We can't possibly afford that because we have to give so much to this one, and so much to that one, and so on, then you might have to accept that fact for the year, but you never finished the fight in a sense.'

Private fund-raising in Canada

- J. C. This might be jumping a bit in time, but I've always had in my mind the question about the extent of public interest in UNICEF. You know, in the early days there was the United Nations Appeal for Children, and then later the National Committees. To what extent did that stimulate greater government support or could the government people say, well UNICEF is getting its support from private sources and there's big private fund-raising so why get into it. What happened in Canada?
- A. S. There were always some people that would use that argument. I don't say that it was the whole government but that was an argument you had to meet. You just have to go on with the process of education.

There were a lot of other campaigns because the conditions were pretty bad for a long time. The government interfered to the extent that one year it almost issued an edict, it was a strong urging that we have just one campaign for children and not five, because we were going to have one for UNICEF, the Save the Children's Fund was going to have one, the agricultural unions were going to have one and it was just going to be cluttering the landscape and not necessarily producing more money than if you had one good campaign. That was tried one year and I don't know if it went on. I think agencies after that felt that they could support themselves or they would get more alone. It was all quite amiable but it didn't work out. There was no hairpulling or anything, it was experimenting. The people got more and more interested as they got working on these things.

Canadian Committee

We got some good people on our Committee, and the Unitarian Service Committee was another one, and the Save the Children's Fund had been going, of course, for about twenty years.

J. C. Were they involved with the committee itself or were they separate?

A. S. They were quite separate. The Save the Children had their headquarters in Europe and they'd been active long before UNICEF was ever thought of. That was a kind of a slightly social snobby thing. The best people entered the Save the Children's Fund and did things in style. They had some awfully nice people but there was a certain amount of ill feeling. I knew enough of those people in it here and they were simply horrified when they got a letter from the head saying that you must put this UNICEF fund-raising out of business - it will be a great threat to us...nothing about doing more for children or anything like that. They came and showed me the letter because they thought it was shocking. They went on working as hard as they could but they had worked in a different way. They staffed their own projects and all that kind of thing. Then there were all sorts of rumors that we were a communist organization, Rajchman, and things, and that was enough excuse for people who didn't want to help or didn't want to see it succeed. That sort of thing came and went. But we got a good committee going.

Ties with UN Association

It started really under the UN Association. They made their office available the first year we were doing greeting cards, gave us an underpinning of staff. That was a help.

J. C. Were you personally involved? Were you one of the originators of the committee?

A. S. I can't say I started the committee. The person who did a great deal about that was Kay Bulbee who was the paid Secretary General of the UN Association. I knew her and a lot of the other people knew her and she got interested. There wasn't too much for them to do just at that point. The association was not very big. She sold cards in the first instance at her office and did a great deal to interest people in it, and then more and more people came on. I can remember consulting with her about who would be a good Chairman for the Toronto committee. We found a very good one and then it spread and it spread and it spread. It's been a very self-supporting and independent organization. It is no longer tied in with the UNA, and there are branches all over the country and they raise an awful lot of money.

Substantive positions

J. C. Has the committee been involved in the position of the Canadian government on substantive issues in the Board or in the amount that the Canadian government contributes to UNICEF?

A. S. I don't think they've been so concerned with the programmes. I think they felt programmes that they knew about were good and we quite often would get people to come and speak to them who were up here from the UN or the delegation.

Volunteers, cards, Halloween

There are enough people here who have time to be volunteers and I've been amazed at the office in Ottawa. There are people who give their time two, three or four days a week. They are mostly either young marrieds or young mothers, but they can make the time to do that and there are some very good ones.

The card thing has gone very well here. They've got all the embassies buying their cards from UNICEF. They like to do that. Sometimes the cards have been designed in their countries and they are quite supportive of that. They took up the Halloween thing when it came along and that has been, at times, very successful.

Briefing by UNICEF Secretariat people

The British Columbia people have always been very active and they're inventive, too, about thinking up ways of making money. When Martin Beyer was here to talk to CIBA about safe water, Elizabeth Edwards of the Ontario Committee said she was going to have to do something for him and would I like to come and have lunch with him or something. Well, I said I would very much like to although I'd never met him. Then I thought, 'Well, how silly. Here is this group of mostly young women, not all of them, who work and work and work for UNICEF and never meet anybody from UNICEF. They don't know what people from UNICEF are like or what kind of people we have or what they do. So I organized a lunch at the Chateau and Elizabeth gave me the names and we had about 15 or 20 people.

J. C. This was recently?

A. S. Yes, this was last year. Beyer was here for 3 or 4 days and he was here partly to see the government about help for water and things, not just for the Committee, but he was very good and we invited some of the older chairmen of the association and the young people from the UNA, and about 6 or 8 of these hard-working volunteers who never get to this sort of thing. They were terribly pleased and I said to him, 'I'm going to do something I have occasionally done on other occasions, you have to sit on my right, to start with'. They gave us a fairly long table, and we sat on both sides and I said, 'When the dessert comes, I'm going to go and get you to sit on the other side of the table and talk about UNICEF and all the things you are doing and what the water programme is like. Everything. And don't mind your talking shop because this is what they need to know and what will make it live for them that they can do this.'

J. C. Well, Adelaide, from what you said, do you think that UNICEF should do more about getting some of its field people, or people who had this kind of experience, to talk to the volunteers of the National Committee? It's an interesting point. You know, one of the next agenda items on the Board is the question of improving our external relations, and I'm not sure anybody has thought about this idea the way you've put it.

A. S. It just seems to me that you have these people who are intelligent and hard-working and keep all this voluntary working going - at no pay or anything like that.' They never meet the people who are doing

things, and when they do, they're terribly excited, terribly thrilled. So I thought anytime I get my hands on one of the UNICEF people, they are going to have to talk...sing for their supper. I don't say that perhaps you should spend a lot of money sending them all over the place.

Now these were people who were working for nothing in the office, not just members, you know, of the association. And I think if you've got groups like that and a lot of ours are like that. There may be big meetings as well, but I just felt for a group like that it would make all the difference in the world. Now Elizabeth Edwards can afford to travel. She is the President of the Ontario Committee now, but she always was involved, and when they were advertising some of these trips she would go. She went to Peru one time and she went somewhere - to New York or the Far East...I've forgotten where. She's full of enthusiasm for all of the work that's going on. She's seen it and she can talk her head off about it. But I think there is a kind of a gap.

When I first came back I was asked quite often to speak to groups, UNICEF people and so on, and the general reaction was, you know, 'I never expected that about UNICEF,' or, 'Isn't that interesting.' I hope as a result they went away and did more than they would have done otherwise. I think people are terribly busy and they want to help a good thing, but they haven't time to read and read and read all our documents or anything like that. I think it could be made a little bit part of the UNICEF staffer's job. Beyer wasn't up here just to talk to the UNICEF Committee, he was here to talk to others, but we sort of pinned him down and said, 'You could do a useful thing if you came to lunch and talked.' He was quite willing to do it.

J.C. Did you do much of that as Canadian Representative also?

A.S. A certain amount.

#### UNICEF image

J.C. On the image of UNICEF, I remember that for a long time our information people would put up pictures of these children with their bones sticking out of their chests and the most horrible pictures of the starving children in Europe and then I remember there was some debate on this within UNICEF. I think it was Maurice Pate's feeling that we ought to get away from that and show the kind of healthy happy children that we're trying to make. But I believe the conflict continued - the conflict, I suppose, between the fund raising, the greeting cards, the relief thing, and the supply agency approach - as against, certainly in recent years, UNICEF as a development agency and with help on planning and advice.

A.S. Well it seems to me we learn quite a lot of things by doing. When you first went out and you just were feeding starving children, that kind of thing grew almost inevitably. I mean, first of all there was

just the starvation and getting food or milk or whatever, and then you began thinking you needed some medicine too. And then sometimes you felt you needed some clothes.

We had said that governments must do things for themselves, we couldn't do the whole thing. They had to match what we did. It became apparent that the thing was much bigger than we could ever solve by ourselves, however willing we were. Also the fact that until the countries could do these things for themselves we weren't really solving any problems. We were saving perhaps one generation or part of a generation, and keeping them alive, but that it was necessary for them to train their own people, to produce their own milk or drugs or whatever they could, or food, and that we could perhaps have more long-range benefits from getting into prevention and getting people to do things for themselves and helping them train their own people.

#### Early long-range vision of UNICEF

J. C. We keep talking about UNICEF's emergency period followed by the long-range period. I've never been entirely comfortable about that since, from the very beginning, some the leaders of the Board such as you and Katherine Lenroot, and certainly Rajchman had larger visions.

A. S. Well, this was part of what I meant when I was talking about how much earlier we got into doing more things than one generally thinks. If I had been asked to speculate on the time we got into this kind of thing or that, I'd have put it much later.

I think you couldn't do that work for a long time without reaching some conclusions about moving on to more action, if you had intelligence. It was so obvious, in a sense, that although we would help solve an emergency it wasn't going to solve anything else if we'd just stopped at the end of that and left the country as it was before.

J. C. Which, I suppose, maybe, would you say, was something new in international assistance - that we really offered some sort of carrot to encourage and support the people in the country who wanted to do something for the country's own children, ultimately amounting to a rather new concept.

#### Church/voluntary agency precedents

A. S. Well, I suppose that we were preceded in that by a great many of the missionary activities of the churches. I don't think we invented it (with my clerical background!). First they set up churches, their schools, but they spent a great deal of time training and educating the people and hopefully making conditions better for them, so that, I don't think, was a brand new idea that we dreamt up. There were things like the Red Cross that were just doing the battle, and I think these programmes were so enormous and conditions so awful that it was possible to arouse a good deal of interest.

The matching principle

The very fact of matching was indicative of the kind of thinking that went on in UNICEF.

- J. C. Originally, wasn't "matching" in terms of food? In other words, we put in a certain amount of food and the countries put in a certain amount of local foods.
- A. S. They were supposed to put in anything they could get their hands on.

Pate

I think Maurice Pate, with his experience from the first War, was a terrific asset, although that was an American thing and not an international thing. I can remember when the Chagall stained glass window was being unveiled at the Secretariat Building ceremony, and Chagall was there who was Maurice's great friend. Maurice had two tickets and asked me to come down there with him and there was Chagall and Maurice's friend, the musician, Andre Kostelanetz. They were sitting just next to us and after the ceremony was over, these two were just clustering around Maurice because, they said, if Maurice hadn't come to Moscow after the first War, they wouldn't have been there that day. I think they were exaggerating, but that was the feeling that was created on what Hoover did and Maurice helped him.

- J.C. What would you say was the main legacy Maurice left, which may still persist, at least in part in UNICEF, in how it operates and the way people regard us and so on?
- A. S. I think Maurice had a tremendous influence because not only had he had the experience of the First War with relief, but he had a lot of convictions. Do you remember the time when he decided that we should all travel economy? He said, 'I can't go to governments and ask for vast sums of money and have you all travel first class. It isn't necessary and we won't do it anymore.' He didn't do it anymore either. He travelled economy. The other agencies were just furious because that meant they were under pressure to do it too. We had one or two UNICEF staff people who were furious and felt it was the greatest possible indignity. I can remember when I first came down in one of my early trips to Latin America. This person who was to be going down to escort me around said to me, 'You know, Maurice has this idea about travelling economy, but of course that would't do for you at all, and I'm sure if you just mention that to him, it could be arranged.' 'Oh,' I said, 'I'm not going to mention it to him. I think it's a perfectly dandy idea. I highly approve of it.' So we travelled together economy. I certainly wasn't going to start out by asking to be exempted from this, but it took some people a while to get used to things of that sort which I thought were eminently reasonable.

J. C. What other characteristics, would you say?

A. S. I think he, more than most people, was absolutely dedicated to what he was doing. He really believed in it. His motives were not self-seeking. I'm really sorry he didn't get the Nobel Prize, but that was just bad luck. I don't think he was working for that.

Sometimes you wanted to argue with him about things awfully hard but, it may sound a little immodest, I think he had a certain quality for picking people. He had some awfully good people like Ed Bridgewater and all that team there. Many came from UNRRA but we couldn't have done better.

Sinclair selection as Deputy Executive Director

J. C. Well, he picked you, did he not?

A. S. Yes.

J. C. Was that a surprise to you?

A. S. Well, I think it was in a way because I'd been a Board member. The offer that was made to me at first, which I thought was very lovely, I didn't know whether he thought about it, but I got a letter...I remember it came on a Saturday morning. I was sitting right here. He said, 'Dear Adelaide, as you know, Borcic is retiring and we've been sitting around discussing who would be good to succeed him. You have been sitting on the Board for ten years telling us what to do. We invite you to come and do it'. Now whether Dick wrote that sentence or not, I don't know. There was a selection committee, I'm sure and Dick was on it. And I just burst out laughing. But that was the sort of challenge you couldn't refuse.

J. C. Adelaide, I don't know whether you recall, when I heard you were coming, I said, 'Gee, isn't that wonderful. You're going to come over and take over and straighten out our administration and our operations and all the rest,' and you kind of stared at me and said, 'That wasn't what I was offered, I was offered programming.' And I recall you said, 'I thought about it long and hard and I really don't know how qualified I am because I hadn't had all this field experience. I've now made up my mind and I am not going to go over to this thing.' I thought you would be absolutely great for the things that Dick had been handling, and I felt that Dick had always had a yen for programming and enormous creativity. But somehow, the die had been cast in the other direction, I have the impression, especially after Borcic's visit to you in Ottawa, and after you had gone through all this trauma of thinking about it.

A. S. Dick did say to me - he was very nice about it - but he said if there was any other job I wanted, he hoped I would feel free to ask for it...more or less hinting at his job.

J. C. But that was as far as he went?

A.S. Yes. Well, I would think it's fair to say, I don't think I would have been interested in his job. I don't think I would have felt I was competent. And then the programmes - you see, I'd been Chairman of the Programme Committee on the Board for so long and I was more at home with those and they were the things that passionately interested me. Of course the other things had to function.

J.C. How did the Canadian Government feel about your appointment as Deputy Executive Director? Had they wanted somebody in a senior post? Was this important and did this affect the Canadian Government's attitude toward UNICEF in the future, and its contributions, and so on?

A.S. Well, I think it affected its contributions as I had more access to them...

J.C. ...At a higher level...

A.S. At a higher level..yes. I don't think they were pushing my appointment at all. I don't think it ever occurred to them because they really didn't give much thought to UNICEF at that point.

Board representatives and government instructions

J.C. As Chairman of the Programme Committee and then later as Chairman of the Board, how did you disassociate your role as representative of Canada and whatever its views were with being the Chairman, or was that not a problem because Canada wasn't all that interested and had no particular fish to fry?

A.S. It wasn't a problem. I had really stopped asking for instructions because I couldn't get any.

J.C. My impression is that, in the early days, we had these "giants" on the Board who made such an important contribution in their own personal right - with the governments not being all that interested. There were four or five or six of these giants (we can talk about them at some later stage). Then there seemed to be a gradual movement away from such people, but the governments developed more interest in UNICEF.

A.S. Well, I think a certain growth in that is almost inevitable as the UN goes on and gets bigger and practically everybody comes with instructions. I doubt if people have the freedom now, although I think that some of them do. But I think a good deal of it depends on what your own government thinks about the importance of the organization. If they haven't that much interest, I'd say, try to make sense out of whatever comes up. But anyway you have no right to commit them beyond a reasonable point.

Sometimes they are perhaps quite content to leave it to you. You know, as my friend Jerry said to me, 'For heaven's sake, Adelaide, use your head. You know you know more about this than we do and if you get in a jam call us and we'll gladly get you out of it.' But I realized after a few years after things got a little more formal, that that was a very blissful period to have worked in because if you used your head you could practically take any position on any programme or any philosophy or any point that you wanted. I have a feeling now - and this is probably pure prejudice - that in those very early days we had a lot of very good people on the Board. Now, I don't know who's on the Board now, maybe they are just as good, but I think it has perhaps gotten a little more formalized. They come with instructions. If their governments read the papers first and say, 'You can't vote for that' or something else, you know, it's difficult. Maybe some delegates write their own instructions pretty much.

J.C. Well, I suppose with any representative it ought to be a mutual give and take in education both ways. That brings us to the feeling of the governments about the importance of technical assistance, UNDP, social affairs, the WHO, the specialized agencies as compared to UNICEF, and also their own bilateral aid, also aid to particular countries that they were especially interested for political or other reasons.

A.S. I can tell you quite frankly that I never was under any pressure or instructions to favour certain countries because we were selling them railways or something like that and it would be nice to help them...that I never had to put up with and I always give my government credit for that. I just felt they weren't very generous on occasion.

Sometimes I got rather mad...but on occasions when there were problems I had to go and get some instructions because I really felt that I was not competent to take certain political decisions...I don't mean they didn't speak to me or anything else. They would give me very good advice but it was quite apparent that they didn't regard it as a large and important part of their international programme.

J.C. You remember Venediktov, the Soviet delegate - a very first class one. Well, before he left to go back to the Soviet Union he said to me, 'You know, the Soviet Union would be more interested in you if you created some sort of political problems. 'You're doing well, so how could we be interested in you?' You're not the squeaky wheel was what I think he was saying. Maybe in a sense that was true in Canada, too in those days.

A.S. Well, it may be. I mean they had gotten to a point to where they certainly were not against UNICEF because it had proved itself, but it wasn't a passionate pursuit of theirs.

Board/Secretariat relations

- J.C. Now let me ask you another thing on Board-Secretariat relations. You were on both sides. I have heard it said that the thoroughness in which the UNICEF Secretariat presented issues to the Board in a way.(?)
- A.S. I don't think I've heard that said.
- J.C. That's nice to hear!
- A.S. I think that perhaps it was an unusual relationship for an international organization. There were very good friendships between both sides. You might argue...well, I mean we argued with Maurice, we argued with all sorts of people. But I think there was a genuine interest in what we were trying to do although the method of doing might cause some differences.

Pate, Heyward

Maurice had a non-combative philosophy and anything that he had to do, whether he wanted to do it or not, he did because he was a good soldier. He wasn't one to fight with the Board. Dick was a different kettle of fish because Dick had very strong views about things. But also he was disciplined, there was a point beyond which he wouldn't go.

Staff as international civil servants

- J.C. Would you say that the combination of first Maurice and Dick and Harry and the various Board chairmen that we have had, (but then also when you got on the staff) there was absolute integrity in being a truly international organization and the staff being truly international civil servants...looking at things entirely on their merit, for UNICEF objectives. Some people concluded a priori that an Anglo-Saxon American-dominated staff would be politically biased. My experience was that we were quite good about not playing politics or in any way subverting the basic principles of UNICEF for political reasons or to raise more money.

Somewhat related to that is my feeling that in the early days perhaps we hid our heads in a bushel too much because Maurice was always saying, 'Let our work speak for itself. Don't get diverted by P.R. Ultimately our work will get to be known.'

- A.S. I think of very few staff who ever got any instructions from their government as to what they were to do about things, and I think people who might have been...perhaps didn't join the staff.

Political issues in Board

Of course there were delegates there who had very strong instructions from their governments as to what they were to fight for

politically. But I think on the whole we were fairly free of that kind of thing. I don't mean people didn't think of political aspects or say it privately. You take somebody like Zena Harman of Israel whose country had very strong feelings about lots of things but this never surfaced in the Board. And there were some countries who wanted more than they were getting. That's fair enough...I mean if they wanted to make their pleas. But I had the feeling that we had less of the political kind of business - I don't say we none of it - but we had less of it than most organizations because in U.N. bodies consist of political delegates, and most of them are there with instructions to do what they are told and most of them do.

Admission of China to Board

J.C. I remember several political issues that arose. One of them was the admission of China to the Board in the late 1940s.

A.S. Oh, yes.

Cuba

J.C. But on the programme matter, I do remember the Cuba problem.

A.S. I was thinking of that. This was at the point when there was a hurricane, hurricane Flora. That year, 1964, the Board met in Bangkok. This hurricane hit a month or two before the Board meeting. Flora went to the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago and Cuba...that was the path...just straight down... It was a brute and so they all wanted help. I remember Dick saying to me as he was passing somewhere and we were talking about this commenting that the U.S. might object to aid to Cuba. Well, I said, 'If Cuba has been hit by the hurricane, just like anybody else, are you expecting us to refuse because the U.S. doesn't like it?' Dick said, 'No, but I'm just warning you,' or something like that. I said, 'Thank you very much but, if that's going to be their attitude...' Word came in and they had all suffered about the same kind of damage, you can never tell the amount really, but still it would have been just simply preposterous and a complete betrayal of UNICEF if we had just said, 'No, we will only give to the other two.' So I thought just to make it a slight compromise, we won't put in separate projects as we usually did for emergencies or for anything else. We'll put in for the whole three countries in a lump amount. Nobody could tell how bad the amount of damage was except that it was terrific in all cases and there was not time to make a real study before the Board documents had to go out. And I said to heck with the United States; if they are going to object, they can object. But we can't, with our mandate for emergencies and countries in need and children in need, say we don't like Cuba so we won't give them anything. Oh, I was ready to resign.

So we put out the Hurricane Flora paper, so many thousand dollars. So that went out. Then we got to Bangkok.

The U.S. was simply livid. How could we dare give aid to Cuba? I said, 'We don't have the same attitude towards Cuba as you do, we are talking about children in need and if we are to help children in need we can't take into account prejudices of every single member country of the United Nations. And we are not going to because I think we ought to go out of business if we start taking dictation of that kind from anybody. We don't deserve to be in business.' Of course there were a lot of people with us completely but we didn't want to involve them in this mess. So we got to Bangkok.

And I think it was a good thing that we were in Bangkok because the press out there could not have been less interested in Cuba than anything in the world. If the meeting had been in New York we might have had all hell broken loose. But out there, as far as press was concerned, what was Cuba? What they wanted to know was what we were doing for Thailand and all these other things. However, this had to be considered and Zena Harman was there for Israel and who was that our nice Turkish delegate?

J.C. Dr. Dogramaci.

A.S. Yes. The U.S. was walking around like mad and Zena and Dogramaci and several others came to me just with tears in their eyes telling me that the U.S. was telling them that if they voted for this (which would have amounted to a small amount for Cuba), and if they voted for this, all U.S. foreign aid to Israel, to Turkey, and what have you, would stop. Now that is blackmail of a very nasty order, I think.

J.C. I never heard that story.

A.S. Well I didn't spread that around, but that was true. Dogramaci asked when it was coming up before the Board.

J.C. Who was Chairman at this time?

A.S. No, it was the Afghan...

J.C. Oh, Tabibi.

A.S. Tabibi. Poor lamb, who was torn, torn, torn.

J.C. He was only acting Chairman because Bustamante had gotten a heart attack in Moscow before the meeting.

A.S. Yes. And he was awfully torn because he tried to play the game very straight. But anyway, these programmes...so many people kept coming to me and just saying it was hard to get through to their governments, their telephone lines weren't good and everything, and Dogramaci said, 'When is this coming up?' Well I said, 'Well I don't think it's coming up until Thursday of next week'. The Board was to

end on Friday. Well, he came back to me and he said, 'The contribution of Turkey to this discussion will be that there will be nobody in the Turkish seat on Thursday, because I have to leave on Wednesday night.'

J.C. Oh yes, I remember that.

A.S. ...And he wasn't going to ask for somebody from the embassy who didn't know anything about it to come down and cast a vote the way the U.S. wanted. So there will just be nobody. And I think he hoped they'd get away with that. And Zena said, 'I can't get on touch with my embassy...It's very difficult and I don't know if I dare take the responsibility of stopping all U.S. foreign aid to Israel on this principle,' but she finally got through and to the credit to the government of Israel they voted for this aid to Cuba. It was just absolutely breathless, the whole thing, it was perfectly awful.

J.C. Wasn't the issue the U.S. had put forward that we didn't have WHO technical approval?

A.S. I don't remember that.

J.C. But, of course, everybody knew what the real issue was.

#### Supply Division role as facilitator

##### Cuba emergency

A.S. The Soviet delegate - a woman - said before we finished this business that we might be interested in knowing there was a representative of the Cuban embassy stationed in Japan in the visitors' gallery. You know, other countries could come and listen to these things, they couldn't take part. And she thought it might be interesting to hear from him what his feelings about this were. Well, some of us held our breath, we did not what was coming or what was being cooked up. And the suavest young man you ever saw, very well dressed, very well educated, perfect English, and everything else, leant forward and said, the Chairman said, 'yes', of course, he did not know what to say, the poor man, he had to let him speak. And so, he said he was very grateful for this opportunity and he didn't think it was appropriate for a country that was not a member of the Board to participate in the decisions of the Board, but he would, as he had the floor, like to take this opportunity of expressing profound thanks of Cuba to UNICEF for aid which they had already given. Well, I swallowed hard, and I thought, 'I should know if they've given any aid or anything else.' But it turned out, and it was a lovely story and it was true. After Flora happened everybody was in a state and when they pulled themselves together and began to look at the extent of the damage and what they really needed and so on, the Cubans came to the conclusion that what they really needed was milk for children. Well they could afford to pay for it but they didn't know where to get it or how to get it to Cuba or anything else. So what do they do? They telephoned UNICEF in New York (I suppose they got Ed Bridgwater or someone in the Supply Division with whom they had

dealt from time to time when they needed things) and they said, 'We are willing to pay for so many million tons of milk, but we don't know where to get it. Can you tell us where to get it?' So the UNICEF staff person said, 'We'll find out. Give us a few hours.' Well they knew where all the milk was and everything else throughout the world and they were pretty sure there was some milk in Montreal. So they telephoned Montreal and it turned out that there were 100 million pounds at the warehouse at the dock in Montreal which Canada would love to sell to somebody. You see, the supply people knew the field so well. Anyway, they said, 'We've the milk, how do we get it there?' because the Cubans had no shipping to send at that point. So they went over the shipping records and it turned out there was a Russian vessel unloading in Montreal with no outward cargo.

J.C. My gosh.

A.S. So they got hold of the Russians and asked if they would be willing, in a great rush, to take this milk on and get it down to Cuba as fast as possible. And the Russians said they would, I think they were paid for it and that was allright, and the Cubans were that prepared to pay. And the milk was there, I think, in seventy-two hours. For the Cubans this was the greatest kind of relief. They were able to pay, they were glad to pay but they didn't know where to go or what to do and UNICEF had the skills and the knowhow.

J.C. Was it a reimbursement to UNICEF or was it straight deal? All we did was to tell them where to buy it?

A.S. Yes this was a facilitating thing which our Supply people did an awful lot of. Everybody else that needed to know, knew they could do it. They were efficient and they knew what they were doing and it was just a case of facilitating something that somebody was going to pay for. So the Cuban representative said, 'This milk got down and it just saved the day for us.' And they were very grateful to UNICEF for thinking of this and, 'We certainly have more needs, but this was the crucial thing and UNICEF has already done that for us.' This just simply floored all the opposition. It was very dramatic. He did it awfully well and that sort of put a little bit of an end to that argument.

#### Cholera in Asia

But, to go back to Ed...I remember another occasion when cholera, I think it was, broke out in Bangkok and it landed on Sam Keeney's desk eventually. Again, Bangkok was quite willing to pay for, whatever it was, you know, the thing you send for cholera, salt and water or something like that. But they didn't know where to get it or what to do. They got in touch with the US Air Force.

J.C. Who did, Bangkok?

A.S. Bangkok did. The government. And they said they would be delighted to fly it out but they didn't know where to get it. They tried Japan and they said they could get some there in two weeks. The best bet would be, if you could find somewhere in the United States that has the stuff on hand, the Air Force would fly it out (whhhhtt) like that if they knew where it was and when it would be ready to be loaded. So that led them to Sam Keeny and they said, 'We are not asking you for supplies. We have money to buy this, but we do need something to facilitate the finding of this and our people will pick it up.' Well, Sam cabled us...a cable I got about half past three or four in the afternoon, asking if we could find out whether any of this was available in the United States and, if so, where and at what time it could be ready for loading, and the U.S. Air Force would come and pick it up. So, I telephoned Ed and his boys and they said, 'Give us half an hour, can we have half an hour?' And I said, 'Yes, you can have half an hour. I would like to get the cable back to Sam today, but...' So they went. And the word came back that there were ample supplies somewhere in the mid-west, Kansas, or somewhere like that, in some factory, and they can have it loaded at whatever the airport was by noon the next day. The flying time was about twelve to fourteen hours to Bangkok. I sent a joyous cable back to Sam saying, 'Supplies available,' so and so, 'Loaded at such and such a station tomorrow.' Anyway, well this went out and this really just clipped the epidemic. Sam was so funny because he wrote back afterwards and he said, 'I have very often been critical of Headquarters, but never have I been prouder of them than when I was today when I came back this morning and found that cable on my desk.'

J.C. That's a great story.

A.S. I never worried about the supply people or tried to check on what they were doing because they were doing it far better than I could have done it, and so we did the best we could with that.

#### Relations in Front Office

J.C. Adelaide, let me ask you one other question. We are kind of jumping around. Within the front office there were Maurice, you and Dick and, at a later stage, there was George Sicault and then Edward Iwaskiewicz. To what extent did each of you stick to your bailiwick or was there a kind of group discussion of each one's major problems? Were you pretty much dominant in yours keeping Maurice informed, and Dick in his, Sicault in his, and so on?

A.S. I think a mixture of both. I don't think there was ever any general feeling that somebody was poaching on your bailiwick. I think as far as possible we each tried to run our own shop and not interfere. But certainly we had meetings. We had, as I recall, Programme Division meetings periodically to clear the first go-around on the programmes or the second or the third, and that would be quite a few people, and probably Iwaskiewicz would be there, and Dick, not always, (if there was anything that he was particularly interested in, it was not as if he couldn't be there...he knew about it).

J.C. What about Maurice on programmes?

A.S. If there was a problem, I might go to him and say, 'Do you think we could do this. It looks awfully needy?' and so on.

J.C. He gave you a pretty free hand?

A.S. Oh yes.

J.C. Did you ever get the feeling that Dick was allowing you a pretty free hand too.

A.S. I don't think that ever occurred to me because Dick had his own bailiwick. I didn't interfere.

J.C. Even though you had a free rein in programme matters, didn't Dick have a special interest in nutrition and a contribution to make toward that?

A.S. Yes, I think very much so. And we tried to keep not too rigid barriers in all these things, and Dick had a lot of knowledge about the nutrition things, and a great deal of interest. He would come to programme meetings which were dealing with nutrition if he felt he wanted to. He was very busy and I was very busy, and I occasionally perhaps trespassed on his personnel problems from time to time because I was interested in those.

J.C. During this period, I was editing something called the UNICEF Staff News which came out weekly and semi-weekly and in order to get the information for the Staff News, I had to scurry around. I felt that if I could see the correspondence of the Front Office I would have the basis for a lot of news items, but there was no central file for the Front Office. I found that Sicault and Dick and Adelaide each had their own file and my feeling was that maybe each was not all that anxious to have the others know everything they were doing. This reflected the tacit understanding that nobody was going to breath down each other's neck - which I agreed with, but it made it difficult for me to edit a really first class Staff News.

A.S. Well, I'm sorry about that, Jack. I didn't know that you were suffering so.

J.C. Maybe that's why it was such dull paper.

A.S. Well, I'm not going to comment on that...But anyway, we were all awfully busy and we each had our separate bailiwicks.

Pate

J.C. I think it was also part of Maurice's style and his being unhappy about paperwork and about having central files. In the rest of the UN, if there were central files and sometimes you got about twenty thick folders put on your desk if you wanted to find something.

I remember when Maurice hired me as secretary of the Board, he questioned whether we really had to keep summary records of Board proceedings. He seemed to feel that much could be done by a gentlemen's agreement, and why do we have to formalize it with unnecessary paperwork. Maurice was not one for paper work.

A.S. Yes, that's true. And I think that was why we all went on our own merry little way and when I had to talk to Dick I talked to him. I don't mean that I didn't want to talk to him, but if I had a problem and if he had a problem with one of my programmes, he came in and talked to me and we might not agree...and George was the same way.

(doorbell rings)

J.C. Well, Adelaide, you've been terrific...I'm sorry that we sacrificed the time for you to change for dinner.

18 November

J.C. This is November 18th and Adelaide and I are continuing our nostalgic dialogue.

Headquarters approval of project proposals

When you were in charge of programmes in UNICEF, how did you see the relationship between the autonomy of the field officers and what Headquarters did about the project proposals before they went to the Board, and the review process and all the rest.

Mechanics

A.S. Well, that was sometimes a tough one. The mechanics of it were that we had one or two or three Board meetings a year at which programmes were submitted for approval of the Board. The Board was very particular about getting them in plenty of time to digest them and that sort of thing, and we had to put timetables on the field staff and deadlines beyond which we wouldn't accept any more projects for the field, and that we had to have them in in time for us to write back and raise questions or suggest modifications. So that it was quite a long and lengthy process. Sometimes it went quite smoothly and sometimes it didn't go very smoothly at all.

Criteria

And sometimes we felt that we didn't have enough money to do all the projects that some of them wanted us to do. I think that was justified, but, you know, the field people were not always happy about the division of the programme budget, but they had to work out with the government and field staff the kind of things they were interested in, the kind of things they were prepared to put money into because one of our rules was that the governments must put in at least the same amount of money from their own resources as they were asking us to put in from ours. Often they put in a good deal more than we put it, but we had to know that the governments were interested and that they would be learning in this process.

Then they had to submit a plan to establish the need for this thing, whether it was feeding or medical supplies or a milk plant or something else that would improve the lot of the children in that country. There were some broad outlines agreed upon in the early part of the year and then they had to find out from the government how big a programme they wanted, what facilities they had for administering the programme, what buildings were needed that they would have to supply, and what staff they they would have available to carry on with it, and get their own thinking worked out (and our field staff helped them to do that very much).

Then the programme came into Headquarters and, as time went on, more and more preliminary things were required as we found we didn't know enough about certain things. We had to be consistently provided with the information, and that we sometimes made some suggestions on our own from Headquarters.

So, as time went on, we either turned the project down because it did not conform to our policies or because we didn't have enough money or any more money for that country sometimes.

#### Agency technical approval

Then projects almost always had to have technical approval because if it was a health programme it had to be certified that it was a sensible programme and a proper one by the World Health Organization. If it was nutrition, the food and agriculture, FAO, probably had to give it their approval, or the Bureau of Social Affairs in the UN if it was a social welfare programme, and so on. But we looked to the technical agencies to certify that the thing was technically sound and that if we carried it on and it was efficiently done, there was both enough money and enough personnel to make it successful.

Sometimes that involved a good many arguments with some of the agencies from time to time. They often had some ideas which we were able to adopt or incorporate that would improve things. It never got into an absolutely hard and fast mold because they were always resorting to improving and learning from past experience.

#### Lengthy process

Then we finally we got it to the point where it came and we had a committee in Headquarters of people on the staff who were either interested either in the region or the subject and we might have to cut it a little if the requests were piling up into enormous quantities and so on. It gradually took form and was reproduced. There was also the question of supplies. We had a supply list which we made available of the kinds of things we could get if you wanted to do certain things or if you wanted to tackle a certain disease, or something of that kind. That had to be checked with supply people and priced and estimates worked out.

Some of the programmes came in very well prepared, some of them not very well prepared at all. You might need a lot of correspondence to clear up points and get the thing into proper shape so that you could, with confidence, recommend it to the Board, because we didn't have so much money that we could be prodigal with it.

The Board members liked to have proposals six weeks ahead of time because some of them had to get approval to support these things from their own governments which might be quite a distance away.

You can describe all this in five minutes, but it was a long and lengthy process. Sometimes we were considered very fussy and very unreasonable about some of the conditions.

J.C. You mean the field people thought you were. That headquarters was?

A.S. Yes, yes.

J.C. Can you recall what were the common points of friction, aside from the amount of money?

A.S. I was going to say that they always wanted more than we had to give them, but that was understood.

J.C. You were about to go on to other points of friction?

A.S. Yes. Some countries were better at fulfilling their commitments than others and, if we'd had bad experiences, we might quite understand that the country was perhaps newly independent, that it hadn't had very much experience, that it didn't have an awful lot of money and that it had some very needy children. That took a certain amount of hammering out.

And then you had to be convinced that the people in the country who were asking for this were really determined to make a go of it if they got it. You were never one hundred percent successful perhaps in that, but that is human and it would be hardly reasonable to claim that you were always successful. But we learned, and we tried to profit from what we learned.

A certain amount of travelling was done from Headquarters by people from the Programme Division to either assist the local people in the preparation of this or to impress upon the government that unless they did absolutely more than they did the last time around we wouldn't be able to continue on these things. That was no fun to have to do. But if you are going to spend your money responsibly, you really have to stick to your guns at times.

But, on the whole, it was a very pleasant relationship. The developing countries had a lot of things to learn, and we had a lot of things to learn too, but we did get, we felt, some good results.

J.C. I have the impression (of course, as you know, I wasn't really part of this process, so this is a sort of corridor impression more than anything else), that it's been the general practice in doing each review at Headquarters you have regional directors in but that it was not general practice to have the country representatives. I would hear from time to time some mutterings by the country representatives saying, 'Well look, the regional director hasn't been to our place for six months or nine months and he doesn't know really what's going on, and he is a spokesman and this got cut out of my programme, and if I had been there I would have been able to persuade them', etc., etc.

A.S. Yes. Oh I think a certain amount of that is inevitable in a large organization.

J.C. (Doorbell rings...)...I think we had better continue this at a later stage.

This is the end of the taped interview with Adelaide Sinclair. It was to have continued on 19 November. She died in her sleep during the night of 18-19 November 1982.

