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UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

OUR DEPARTING GIANTS

Comments by James P. Grant, Executive Director, UNICEF
at the farewell party for
Messrs. Heyward, Egger, Charnow and Stein
21 December 1981

Friends and colleagues:

A week ago we met together with old friends to celebrate UNICEF's 35th birthday. Today we meet to thank some colleagues who did much to make those 35 years worth celebrating - to thank them, wish them health, happiness, and many, many more productive years of life, and to take our formal leave of them.

Thirty-five years is half of the Psalmist's span of three score years and ten, half a lifetime. There is a sort of sadness in our hearts as we raise our glasses to men who have given so much of their lives - the best years of their lives - to the work to which we all have dedicated ourselves. But, that sense of sadness is mitigated - and even embellished - by our common awareness that what we are marking tonight is not just the passage of time, and the fact of having to part with veteran colleagues, and by the gratitude we feel that those years they gave to that work were years of high endeavor, high purpose, high quality. Their history has not been that of one year's experience repeated 35 times, but a rich fund of good ideas and hard work carried through and renovated many times. That indeed is a rich heritage. And, like good inheritors, we must resolve tonight to use it thriftily and well. That is the only recompense, the real gold watch, that we can give them in return for their bequest.

When I came here almost two years ago, I soon found that UNICEF was not just an agency with a mandate to provide international assistance for the benefit of children and mothers, with an enviable reputation for being good at it. I found that it is much more than that. It is a repository of a system of humane values, a living archive of effective working relationships with governments, national committees, non-governmental organizations, and with parents and children. And I found that for those who worked at UNICEF it is not only a place to earn a living and to make a career, but a way of life.

Many good and great men and women have contributed to bring that about: members of our Executive Board, Maurice Pate, Harry Labouisse, their wives who had shared their dedication and agony, and the staff in the field and at headquarters who carried the ideals they personified into action.

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Tonight some of them are leaving us, among them men who have contributed mightily to making the legend of UNICEF. So let us express our gratitude and bid God Speed to each.

Herman Stein. Herman has devoted much of the past 20 years to UNICEF as guide, philosopher and, in the best sense, teacher to three Executive Directors, and to all staff members concerned with making policy and translating policy into programmes. He brought the gifts of academia into our work with discretion and discrimination so that knowledge and practice reinforced one another. He is one of that rare breed of academics with a keen sense of the practical - what works, given the circumstances, and what does not; what is real and what is spurious, what is useful and what is mere scholarly gamesmanship. And, although the center of gravity of his own education was in the field of knowledge, Herman brought to us a profound understanding of the value of people. The staff seminars which he organized - indeed initiated - have become a distinguished part of the culture of UNICEF, a process of re-education and re-dedication which has kept our work in the field green and vital.

In the past few months, while silently carrying the burden of intense suffering in his own family life, he has given his mind and labour to producing and editing a series of country studies, which in bulk amounts to two volumes of "Gone With the Wind", and, in quality, is a classic work which is bound to have a profound impact on our work in the remaining years of this millennium.

The role of advisor offers some satisfaction, but it is also fraught with many disappointments as, no doubt, Herman has found. Not the least of them is that advice is not always taken, and, when it is, it is often distorted in the execution. But Herman Stein has deep reserves of humanism which modulates and supports his sense of pragmatism, and - as you have seen tonight - he has an easy sense of fun. Broadway lost a star when Herman chose to counsel UNICEF, and to illuminate our path. But the loss for the Great White Way has surely been our gain.

Jack Charnow. When Jack Charnow came to the doors of UNICEF 35 years ago, in 1947, he could never have imagined that UNICEF or he would still be in business in 1981. The people of Europe and Japan were beginning to raise their heads, shocked and bloodied, from the rubble of war. And here was a young man, 33 years of age, an American called in by Maurice Pate to help young children in trouble in Warsaw, Helsinki, Berlin, Rome, Tokyo, and many other smaller cities which had been through that man-made hell. The press of the time was full of those horrors, and the great Neo-Realist of the cinema, Roberto Rossellini, had just made the world aware of the plight of children through his art in "Rome, Open City". The United Nations was only a fledgling political organization recently established to police the world against a possible resurgence of Nazism and Fascism. And here was a tiny offshoot called UNICEF given the task of raising funds and disbursing them to assist children in a war-torn world, an effort which cut through political boundaries, ideological considerations, past enmities and present alliances. Right there a fundamental principle of UNICEF was established: children are indivisible. That noble idea recently reinforced by the impulses generated during IYC has been a prime source of guidance in UNICEF's distinction in international affairs.

There was another principle, also unique, established in those early years - the principle that private philanthropy and unofficial institutions and individuals concerned with the improvement of the lot of children were an integral part of UNICEF's means and method of work. This became even more important when UNICEF was asked to stay in business after it had fulfilled its emergency mandate in 1950 to deal with the fall-out of another sort of war - the war against gross poverty and gross underdevelopment. The evolution of that aspect of our work, what later came to be known as the non-governmental organizations, was Jack Charnow's responsibility in addition to his function as Secretary of the Board. The concept of a permanent Secretaryship of the Board was in itself a unique idea - no other UN organization has such a distinct function and no other has devoted so much effort and attention to service its governors as UNICEF has. There were others, of course, who played important parts in that development, but, I believe, it was Jack Charnow's understanding of his duties and his personal links with individual Board members which contributed most to the evolution of that symbiotic relationship between the Executive Board and the Secretariat of UNICEF.

Jack held nothing back from them, and they, in turn, gave him their trust. There isn't a mean bone in his body and, over the years, people realized that Jack Charnow never uttered a malevolent word about his colleagues - sad to say, a far too rare attribute in the get-ahead world in which we live and work. And, perhaps even more endearing was the fact Jack always gave credit where credit was due but often begrudged. He is truly a generous man.

As a writer of reports, I make bold to say, he was among the best in the world. He loved writing reports, and what he wrote were informative, complete, concise and, unlike most bureaucratic reports, intelligible. I saw Jack at work on the podium during Board meetings when I was a delegate, whispering his counsel in neighboring ears, filtering among the members on the floor always serviceable, always charming, always smiling through the most perilous storms. But I shall not forget his cool during that Donnybrook in May when Jack Charnow sat beside me on the podium, professional as ever, calm as ever, following up every detail, always affable among the verbal brickbats that were flying about the room. Jack's qualities are perhaps best summed up in one phrase: He was always respectful of other people - the people he served, the people who served him, and also of the people at the receiving end of our work. And because he was respectful of others, it was inevitable that other people found it easy to respect him. I certainly found it so.

Charles Egger. As I travel around the world talking with our colleagues out there, and during the discussions we have in the front office, I am made frequently aware that Charles Egger's particular place in the history of UNICEF will be as the man who resolutely and indefatigably never let us forget that the focus of our work was in the field, and that ideas and policies should be rooted in the field. He, perhaps more than anyone else, kept everyone conscious of the fact that most of our resources were being deployed in the world of villages where the great majority of the globe's population eke's out a bare living. Charles, who joined UNICEF at age 32, has been the living embodiment of the field general in a war we have been fighting, not with guns and bullets and napalm, but with hyperdermic syringes, vaccination needles, rehydration tablets, nutriments, clean water and education - and going to the front lines endlessly to provide support and leadership, and to acquire more knowledge for headquarters decision making.

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Charles' penchant for field generalship made him the obvious choice to oversee our emergency operations of the past two years - in Kampuchea, on the Thai border and, later, in Africa. He is one of those generals who prefers to deal with reality in the field where the action is, and he was tireless and courageous in making his sorties into the villages of Kampuchea, the Sahel, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, Angola and wherever else children are hungry and in mortal peril as a result of climatic damage or of man's inhumanity to man. We are deeply indebted to him for the conscious approach we have adopted to work with the displaced people of those countries - families whose lives have imploded within their own national boundaries, so deeply and suddenly made destitute, that they are too feeble even to cross a border to qualify for assistance as refugees.

I shall not forget the impassioned eloquence with which Charles, on his return from East Africa last winter advocated the necessary deployment of funds, equipment and staff to launch an emergency programme in Africa while he and many of us were still involved neck-deep in the rescue work needed in Kampuchea. That plea impelled us to call the special session of the Board which gave us the go-ahead to use our general resources to fund an expanded emergency operation in Africa a few weeks later.

I have observed Charles Egger - the logistics manager in the field; Charles Egger, the diplomat moving with consummate finesse through the minefields of political conflict between countries involved in emergencies; and Charles Egger the UNICEF colleague relating to his workmates at headquarters and in the field without being even slightly inhibited by considerations of rank or of age or prerogative. He has been a kind and humane soul, a valuable counsellor, and I am fortunate to have worked alongside him these past two years.

Dick Heyward. And now, to Dick. To attempt to utter a valedictory note about Dick Heyward is to attempt the impossible. How can one say enough, or anything at all, about a living monument to everything for which UNICEF stands? Every programme, every piece of paper we have produced to initiate a project, to design a country programme, to explain what we do, virtually every staff member's work and values, bears Dick's unmistakable imprint in large or small measure. Every good and brave endeavor for which UNICEF has earned worldwide applause has been touched by his mind and by his hand. Every idea and plan that has passed over his desk has been deepened by his understanding and improved by the meticulous craftsmanship of the man, each detail tested for trueness, each facet honed and polished to brightness, each separate part cut and mortised to fit the other so that the entire result comes out complete, interrelated, and sound through and through. Quality has been the hallmark of his labors.

For three decades and more Dick Heyward has constantly astonished his friends, his colleagues and the Executive Board. He has been the epitome of the productive paradox. He talks very little but the little he says - or implies by a shrug of his shoulder or the lift of an eyebrow or by a grunt - contains volumes. He writes a great deal, but has never found it necessary to resort to jargon which so many civil servants use as substitutes for thought. He travels relatively little but he is familiar with the goings on in every little nook and cranny in which UNICEF works. His reading is quite evidently voracious and eclectic - he knows his way through our library, and the

esoterica of breastfeeding, better than all of us here - but none of us knows when he does his reading. He is a devotee and connoisseur of Renaissance painting, as the Art Committee of GCO knows, and of classical music, but he does not display those tastes in public. Dick is a private man deeply devoted to public purpose. He has been the busiest man in the office - he had 20 hour working days and 80 hour working weeks when the Board was debating the budget, but he always had time for just one more staff member who must drop in to clear a problem in his programme or in his personal life; Dick is not a gregarious man but he has many friends all over the world. He is rigorous about facts but does not let them obscure the wider truth. He is pernickety about detail but never loses his vision of the whole. He is a moral man who does not moralize about the weakness of others. UNICEF has been his life, but he has always borne in mind that UNICEF is not for UNICEF but for the children it serves.

In a lifetime spent among civil servants in many parts of the world I have never before met the like of Dick Heyward. He is the quintessential international civil servant whose life has illustrated the meaning of what it is to be international, to be a civilian and to be a servant of the people.

Maurice Pate wrote Harry Labouisse in November 1964, in words which were a living testament to Dick Heyward's first term of service:

The outstandingly able person in our work is my first deputy, E.J.R. Heyward of Australia. He was originally the Australian member of our Board and moved into the staff in the end of 1948. For sixteen years Dick Heyward has been my closest partner.

And I should note that Dick Heyward was 34 when he came in as deputy more than 32 years ago.

I, for one, will miss being able to count on his boundless reliability when the going gets rough. I shall miss the advantage that was so easy to take for granted that Dick's experience was available on tap, right there, next door. I shall miss his wise counsel mumbled in my ear these past two years ...

We shall miss all of you who are leaving UNICEF, and your wives who have been so supportive in your efforts on behalf of children everywhere.

But I have said all I can say tonight and I know I speak for everyone here when I say we shall miss you. Let me close by offering this toast to each and all of you. Thank you. Be well and happy wherever you go, whatever you do. At UNICEF we shall remember you with gratitude and affection.
