

BODHI TIMES

June, 1998, No. 14

Newsletter of
Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight (BODHI)

The Environment Time Capsule Project

Professor John Guillebaud begins our series by and about BODHI's advisers. He is the world's first practicing gynaecologist to be given a personal chair as Professor of Family Planning & Reproductive Health.

"Why Isn't Everyone as Scared as We Are?" In October 1993, the world's scientific academies echoed this chapter title from Paul Ehrlich's 1990 book, *The Population Explosion* [London: Arrow Books]: 'Humanity is approaching a crisis point with respect to the interlocking issues of population, environment and development'. Global population is nearly 6 billion, with another million new arrivals every four days; do we prize quantity of human flesh above quality of human life? We threaten the habitats and very existence of other species with which we share this fragile planet. How many will be known by our grandchildren only through museums and video recordings? (1)

Meeting the material needs and legitimate aspirations of billions of present and future 'have-nots' will threaten global security and irreversibly damage the planet's environment, unless simultaneous attention is paid to the numbers issue—in every country and at all income levels, since births in rich families cause the greatest environmental damage—and unless the 'haves' consume and pollute less flagrantly.

THE GREAT MULTIPLIER

Over-population is not the cause of all the world's ills, but it is a great

multiplier. More people suffer the miserable outcomes. We must deal with the problem of human NUMBERS if we are ever going to meet human NEEDS. Rather than counting people, we should remember that 'people count': meaning education, empowerment of women, good but inexpensive family planning and reproductive health services to supply the methods which women

UNICEF said: "Family planning could bring more benefits to more people at less cost than any other single technology now available to the human race."

ENVIRONMENT TIME CAPSULE

On the UN's World Environment Day (June 5) in 1994, and addressed to the people of 2044, Time Capsules containing environmentally relevant objects were buried with explanations and letters of apology at significant sites: Kew Gardens in London, Ness Gardens near Liverpool, and also in Mexico, South Africa, the Seychelles and Sydney, Australia. Children entered two competitions: one for the best brief letter or poem addressed to 2044; the other to choose a 1994 artifact for the capsule, either environmentally friendly, such as a bicycle pump, or the reverse, like a petrol cap!

OUR GOAL

The apology concept comes from the saying 'we have not inherited the earth from our grand-parents, we have borrowed it from our grandchildren'. I reflected on their opinion of us should we wreck their

inheritance. More empowering was the pledge: to fight to save the planet by individual and united action according to our talents and opportunities, changing as necessary our own lifestyles, from that June day onwards. Our goal: that in 2044 the finders of each Time Capsule will wonder why we apologised!

Control of consumption, social justice, birth planning, 'leading full lives without

cont. p. 4

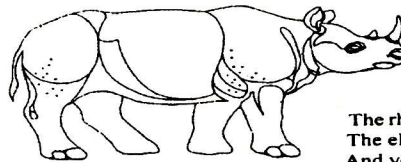
The Promise

The Rhino falls to its knees, a horn
ripped untimely from its head, and dies.
The elephant majestically crumbles, its
magnificent tusks gone, and dies.
A baby child is born.

In his hand he clutches the hopes of a
new generation, and the sorrow of the old.
He will probably never find his full
potential.
He will be stunted before he has grown.

It is not your generation, please don't let
it be.

We will give you this world, black and dying, unless we do something.
We will try.



We will raise awareness,
hope and peace.
Our world will not be your world.
Yours will be better.

The rhino shall roam freely,
The elephant shall live long,
And you shall live in a better world.
A living world.

I promise.

Paula de Villers (15), Carter High School, Pietemartizburg,
Republic of South Africa - 1994

Winner, children's competition, South African Time Capsule, World
Environment Day, 1994.

deserve as a human right. National surveys in sixty countries show that, now, family planning is wanted by most of the world's women.

Yet we do not meet their unmet need. Multitudes of mothers die (the equivalent of a full jumbo jet crashing every six hours) in childbirth and through unsafe abortion. Around forty percent of these deaths come from unwanted conceptions. In its 1992 Annual Report,

BLIND MEN, ELEPHANTS & THE FIFTH CONTINENT

The concepts of accelerating economic globalisation and financial deregulation have been promoted in the media since at least the early days of Reaganomics and Thatcherism. This model has been sold both to governments in developing countries and to the affluent Western public as an efficient and moral way to generate wealth for all. Nevertheless, security and happiness seem more elusive than ever. The gap between rich and poor continues to increase. Though the GDP has risen, other measures accounting for quality of life and erosion of natural capital have fallen, such as the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI). More people live behind walls, the wealthy in gated communities and suburbs insulated by a myriad of ordinances, the poor in prison. Diplomats, media workers and "development" experts travel with portable walls, passing from one generic hotel to another, insulated from bad water and disturbing sights.

Why are these gaps increasing when our world can produce unprecedented quantities of goods and services at ever-diminishing prices without dependence on slave labour? Mass production, robots and software programmes replace repetitive work formerly performed by humans, and do so more quickly and efficiently. Instead of a boon in goods and services, market forces restrict sales and distribution. Inordinate resources are siphoned either to the military or to such non-productive investments as unnecessary office space in Kuala Lumpur.

THE GLOBAL "CLASTE" SYSTEM

It may be useful to conceptualise humanity into four groups, distinguished by indicators including wealth, education, political influence, energy and resource consumption levels and health. Susan and I have considered calling these groups "clastes", a hybridisation of "caste" and "class". The bonds between these clastes are, I believe, stronger than race, ethnicity or culture. The wealthiest claste of almost 400 billionaires includes not only Bill Gates and Ross Perot but also oil-rich Arabs, Indonesia's ex-President Suharto and, probably, Columbian drug barons.

Billions of dollars were needed to rescue Indonesia from its currency crisis. Why did the International Monetary Fund not recommend that the Suharto family contribute? I believe that the global media, itself largely controlled by the highest claste, the "stratos" dwellers, retains just enough criticism of inequality to maintain the illusion of support for political and economic democracy. The media perpetuates inequality: most stories support the global status quo. "Infomercials" are uncritically broadcast as news. Self-censorship is common to further the interests of advertisers and budget-slashing economic rationalists—ecorats, for short. Rupert Murdoch's publishing company refused to publish ex-Hong Kong governor Chris Patten's book, which may have offended Chinese and British politicians and compromised Murdoch's freedom to turn the lucrative Chinese market into rabid readers of his gutter press.

BLIND MEN, MYTHIC CONTINENTS

Just as four blind men described an elephant in four completely different ways so, too, analysis of the world's rights and wrongs depends very much on one's claste. Unfortunately for those in the third and fourth clastes, the world view of the upper two clastes dominates publicity, despite the latter's numerical insignificance. For example, we now hear how the internet may promote freedom. I hope it does, but most of the world cannot easily access a telephone, let alone a computer. Hundreds of millions cannot read, particularly in the two lower clastes. Sophisticated blocking software enables censorship of interests as diverse as the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper, which is unavailable on the worldwide web in China, and anything vaguely reminiscent of socialism, including public health.

Imagine a world with four continents, separated by vast oceans. One continent contains a few million people living in palaces and issuing orders. Health care is exemplary, educational standards are high, everything works. On another continent, one billion people live second-

claste, comfortable but frenetic and increasingly insecure lives. The GPI falls inexorably for these people. As administrators and professionals, they take orders from the first claste and issue them to the third claste. Working hours are long, careers are tainted by fear and greed. Much leisure time is spent addicted to the media and the worldwide web, where fantasies of life in the first claste are especially popular. This continent produces frequent analyses of how all, including those in the third claste, are benefiting from the system.

More than four billion third-claste workers occupy the third continent. Life expectancy has passed sixty years. People work with their hands and bodies, making goods they can rarely purchase. Coercion, exhaustion and sometimes murder keep social unrest at bay. Education is poor, literacy and leisure time low. Escape to the second continent is a dream promoted in soap operas but realised by few. Currency falls periodically check rising real incomes. First-claste investors sometimes fly in to pick over the carcass, vultures looking for more bones to exploit.

Awareness of the fourth continent is minimal. War, especially "civil," is commonplace, as are illiteracy, starvation, malnutrition, suicide, trauma and despair. Tropical- and poverty-related diseases flourish. There is little media, and communication is largely personal and verbal. Stories of life in the second claste seem fantastic. No one has heard of the first continent. Somewhere, I am sure you will be pleased to hear, there exists a fifth continent where people are happy and live moral and contented lives. Given the existence of the other four lands, can those on the fifth really be content?

RWANDA, BONO & KENNEDY

If this world seems absurd, it is only because the global claste system is not geographically partitioned. Escape from an impoverished childhood in Rwanda to a life of ease and power in Cape Cod is as likely as CNN making African famine its top story the same night that US celebrities ski into trees.

. INDIA . BALI . SIAM . TIBET . AND . YOU .

SISTER JESSIE

Penpals. Sister Jessie writes from India that "Our teachers and children enjoyed and were very pleased to see the letters" from schoolchildren in Campbell Town, Tasmania. The next step is to introduce English into the curriculum. Teachers do not feel confident enough to write or supervise writing of letters in English. Sr. Jessie will help the children to write back as soon as she gets time.

To Australia? BODHI has long supported the work of Sister Jessie, Christian *sannyasin* (renunciate), and her organisation, Massihi Gyanodaya Abhiyan (MGA, Campaign for Awakening Wisdom). MGA currently employs about sixty-five teachers (ranging in age from fourteen to forty) in sixty villages, and reaches 3,000 untouchable children who would

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Here are some ongoing projects in which you may wish to participate:

- A\$72/US\$45 1 bicycle for use by schoolchildren in Northeast Thailand.
- A\$45/US\$28 Salary of 1 of Sr. Jessie's teachers in Bihar, India, for 1 year.
- A\$262 /US\$165 Tidy Villages: improve basic health, sanitation and environmental education in Tibetan villages in S. India for 1 year.
- AS\$276/US\$173 Training or refresher course for 1 Tibetan monastic community health worker (CHW) in India.

This new project needs your help.

A\$912/A\$1825/US\$575/US\$1,150

Health, sanitation, educational and environmental needs for 1 village in Tibet for 6 months/1 year.

**World Environment Day 2000: please contact Prof. John Guillebaud at address on p. 4, col. 3.*

otherwise receive no education. Environmental education includes saving and replanting trees.

An incentive encourages teaching girls. *Friends of Sister Jessie* say that Sister

Jessie badly needs a rest and request your help in bringing her to Australia. She will be available to give public talks. Please write PO Box 770, Lismore. NSW 2480, Australia, or ring (02) 66 895 457.

SULAK IN SIAM

The next BODHI Times will feature the work of our adviser Sulak Sivaraksa, lawyer, author, social critic and 1994 nominee for the Nobel Prize for Peace. In the last few years, Sulak has founded two organisations. Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) provides training courses and promote alternative kinds of education integrating the head and the heart. Topics of study include deep ecology, green politics, meditation and community building. Alternatives to Consumerism Project (ATC), uses interfaith dialogue to search for model alternatives to consumerism.

The *Bangkok Post* reports: *Thongpaphum, Kanchanaburi, May 13, 1998*: "Sulak Sivaraksa ... was arrested on March 6th along with 50 activists while camping out in a forest of Western Thailand to stop the construction of a gas pipeline from Burma.

INDONESIA

Though BODHI at this stage has no projects in Indonesia (*see col. 3*), we have expressed sympathy for the people of East Timor and Irian Jaya. We pray that the democracy currently taking birth throughout Indonesia will root firmly and lead to considerable improvement for ordinary Indonesians. We also hope that the intertwined environmental, economic, human rights and political crises of this vast archipelago are soon resolved.

TIBET..... SOUTH INDIA

As this goes to press, we are talking to a United States contact about commencing a project in Tibet to look after the health, educational and environmental needs of one village.

We are also seeking funds for medical aid for new arrivals from Tibet to S. India.

AN OPHTHALMOLOGIST IN BALI

Since 1991, BODHI donor Dr Geoffrey Cohn, a Sydney, Australia, ophthalmologist, has spearheaded a project that treats Balinese people afflicted with white eye, which is caused by cataracts or corneal damage. "In Bali, you can do a lot with a little", Dr Cohn says. "They are living in paradise but they can't see it". A few dollars changes that.

Dr Cohn and other Australian ophthalmologists train local doctors and nurses in modern ophthalmic surgical procedures. Only five failures have been reported out of 9,000 cataract operations. These were due to infections or bleeding.

Dr Cohn plans to work next in Cambodia. If you have contacts in this area, or for further details, please contact Dr Geoffrey Cohn c/- Eye Clinic, Prince of Wales Hospital, Randwick, NSW 2031, Australia; email: geoffcohn@one.net.au.

EXCLUSIVE POSTER OF HIS HOLINESS XIV DALAI LAMA

BODHI is proud to offer a 20" x 23" (50cm x 58 cm) colour poster of His Holiness XIV Dalai Lama, photographed at dawn in Central Park, New York. Poster design is of the highest quality, with maroon border and saffron lettering. Photographer John Bigelow Taylor has generously donated this image to BODHI and supervised poster production. Mr. Taylor specialises in objects of art and antiquities, as well as travel and architecture. He has worked around the world with museums and private collections. Among his numerous credits is *Wisdom and Compassion—The Sacred Art of Tibet* (Abrams). Kuan Chang, a New York graphic designer and artist who works with Mr. Taylor, donated his design talents. Mr. Chang has designed books, catalogues and other material for many museums, cultural institutions and publishers.

Exclusive offering from BODHI. Price: from \$20-\$30 (your choice). Orders of more than 10: \$15 each OR make us an offer.

WHAT IS BODHI?

Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight (BODHI) focuses on sustainable ways to improve health, education, the environment and human rights, particularly in developing countries. BODHI was founded in 1989 on the principles of skillful and compassionate action.

BODHI is neither religious nor political. We have supporters and advisers from many faiths. We ask for a kind heart and practical assistance.

Realising the interdependence of all beings is in our enlightened self-interest. If we don't work together to reduce the world's much-discussed problems, then who will?

WE NEED YOUR HELP

Thanks to your generosity, BODHI has been able to begin some exciting and innovative programs. We need your donations to continue. Please send your cheque, payable in US or Australian dollars, to an address below.

US donations are tax-deductible.

BODHI Times is the biennial newsletter of Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health & Insight (BODHI).

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We greatly value your support and keep our mailing list confidential.

AUSTRALIAN TAX-DEDUCTIBILITY

We are planning to reapply for tax-deductible status (TDS) in Australia, for two reasons. First, the chance to enhance our effectiveness that TDS offers by generating extra funds more than compensates the disadvantage of being partially muzzled by the government. The government will subsidise our donors by rebating in the tax return a proportion of funds donated, depending on the donor's marginal tax rate. Second, we believe that potential Australian donors may equate the lack of TDS with being ineffectual, non-financially transparent or less legitimate.

To increase our chances of achieving TDS, we want to expand the size of our subcommittees. The work involved need not take much of your time, though of course contributions of time and skills are very valuable to us and **deeply appreciated**. Please apply to any of BODHI's Australian board members.

Passings Longtime BODHI friend **Carol Rubin** died after a protracted battle with breast cancer. Our deepest condolences to Carol's family. We miss you, Carol.

From Dr Denis Wright

DIRECTOR OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

Thanks to the wonders of electronic media, our Board of Directors has kept in close contact despite our busy lives. Lack of time to discuss our priorities and goals seems to prevent us from making greater use of our email connections.

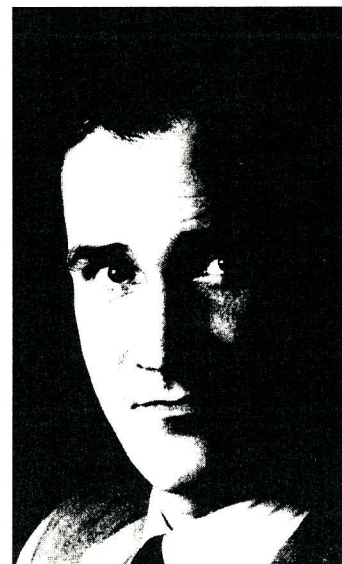
Our website has changed from the free Tripod site used for the past year to a donated site with a commercial provider. This will free us from the tyranny of advertising that has afflicted our previous home page site; advertising not always congruent with our principles. The URL for our new website is:

<http://www1.tpgi.com.au/users/janette7/bodhi>

We hope those of you with web access will bookmark this new address and visit our site, whose essentials have been transferred over, with minor cosmetic changes. We plan to reorganise the site completely in the year to come. Your suggestions about what you would like to see on the site are welcome.

from p.1

dirtying a single stream! - we would like you to join us, from other countries, any year (maybe 2000?) on Environment Day, by organising a similar time capsule ceremony, addressed to the people of the same year, 2044. As we campaign together on all these interconnected issues, why shouldn't apologies to our grandchildren become truly superfluous? It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness!



Prof. John Guillebaud.

1. Joint statement of the world's scientific academies. in F. Graham-Smith, ed, *Population: The Complex Reality* (London: The Royal Society, 1994: 377-84).

JOHN GUILLEBAUD, MA FRCSE FRCOG MFFP, Professor of Family Planning and Reproductive Health University College, London Hospitals, Medical Director, Margaret Pyke Family Planning Centre.

Please contact Prof. Guillebaud for information about World Environment Day 2000 c/- the Margaret Pyke Family Planning Centre, 73 Charlotte St., London W1P 1LB, UK; tel: +44-171-436 8372; fax: +44-171-436 8394.

THANK YOU

Thank you for your continuing support.

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