



The BAFUNCS Newsletter

March 2017

N° 71



Immanuel Giel; Wikimedia commons

King's Lynn town hall will be the venue for our civic reception during this year's Annual Reunion

In this issue

- The UN at 70 and the UK, BAFUNCS' role
- BAFUNCS @ 40 Survey: Initial findings
- Report of the Executive Committee for 2016/2017
- Guide to UNCRP resources launched
- Round-up of regional activities
- Membership news

British Association of Former United Nations Civil Servants

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BAFUNCS Newsletter N° 71

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Note from the Editor

UNCRP, our collaboration with the Bodlean Library in Oxford to record the contributions BAFUNCS members made to the United Nations and to international development, formed the bedrock of the three Witness Seminars held in 2015 and 2016 in collaboration with the United Nations Association of the UK. Drawing on our knowledge and experience in development, humanitarian issues, and peace and security, these seminars lead to the publication of an 'Evidence Report' entitled The UN at 70 and the UK. As well as being an enriching process for those who took part in it, it is to be hoped that the Witness Seminar programme and the UN Evidence Report process may also contribute in one way or another to the formulation and review of policies affecting the UN system, and the UK's contribution to it as it enters its next stage.

As well as gathering together the reports of activities in the regions, Sheila Macrae presents the conclusions she can draw from her survey of BAFUNCS members on the occasion of our 40th birthday.

Putting together a newsletter is complicated by the need to print pages in fours. Sometimes the material available needs to be expanded to fill the requisite number of pages and sometimes cut. Perfectly good articles have to be left over for future editions, or even left out altogether just because of space considerations. Even so, the Newsletter would be greatly improved if more members wrote up their experiences of working for the system, or enjoying their retirement.

*The deadline for contributions to the **September 2017** issue is **Friday 11 August**. If you wish to try out an idea before writing, I can be contacted by phone: 0033 68 117 5387, by letter: Magheross, Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan, Ireland or, preferably, by e-mail (editor@bafuncs.org) easily accessed by clicking on the link on the contacts page of the BAFUNCS website.*

Clyde Reynolds

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In support of liberal internationalism

Robert England

At a time when liberal internationalism seems to be under threat around the world, it is all too easy for British people to underestimate - and indeed to undervalue - the role that the United Kingdom has played in giving form and substance to the international organisations which embody these values.

Of course, this is certainly not true of BAFUNCS members, all of whom have spent a significant part of their professional lives working in various parts of the United Nations System, the apogee of such international collaboration. Capturing this experience for posterity has been the mission of the UN Career Record Project (UNCRP), jointly sponsored by BAFUNCS and the Bodleian Library of Oxford University.

The sheer range of British involvement in the UN System is well captured by the soon-to-be published Researchers' Guide to the UNCRP. This Guide has been compiled by our own Bill Jackson and provides invaluable career summaries of more than 300 UK nationals who have worked in the System over the years. Many of these have already lodged papers as well as reminiscences with the Bodleian Library as part of the UNCRP.

The Guide will provide a deep vein of personal experiences and reflections for researchers into what Sir Richard Jolly has called "the first phase of global government" - a turn of phrase which sounds a little optimistic at this stage of the political cycle but the evidence suggests that, notwithstanding the recurrent buffets of chauvinistic nationalism, the UN has been painstakingly assembling the building blocks, not only in terms of global institutions but also the international normative values and standards which underpin them.

Some of this evidence was on show when a distinguished cast of senior British UN luminaries gathered at Westminster on 20 October last year to launch the latest product emanating from the UNCRP: "The UN at 70, and the UK: Development Cooperation, Humanitarian Action and Peace and Security". This report brings together the proceedings and papers of three Witness Seminars held in honour of the UN's 70th birthday and attended by a wide range of retired British international civil servants, as well as academics and FCO diplomats.

The editors of The UN at 70 and the joint impresarios of the entire witness seminar programme have been our former president, Sir Richard Jolly, and long-time BAFUNCS UNCRP Coordinator Michael Askwith. They are both to be congratulated for this substantial contribution to the UN's history and the part Brits have played in it.

The report spans the three operational pillars of the UN - development cooperation, humanitarian response and peace-making/keeping - while maintaining an integrated global perspective on how these three activities are indissolubly linked and mutually supportive. In this there are contributions from former Deputy Secretary-General Lord Malloch Brown; from Dame Margaret Anstee (to whom the report is dedicated); from Alan Doss; and includes a reflection by David Whaley on the importance of human rights as the normative framework which should bring them together, but which can all-too-easily come compromised or neglected. A constant theme, emphasized by UNA's Natalie Samarasinghe, is the importance of renewed efforts to ensure appropriate levels of British representation at all levels of the UN System's various secretariats and programmes.

The report concludes with a number of recommendations from the collective pens of Sir Richard Jolly, Sir Jeremy Greenstock and Prof. Adam Roberts the essence of which, however, emerged by consensus from the three witness seminars: the need for strong leadership and creative reform within the UN at all levels; the need for strong, supportive and consistent UK representation across the various parts of the UN System to help guide the reform and reinforce the leadership; a re-statement of the quintessential importance of the UN working with and in support of national actors, rather than simply imposing from afar; and the lasting strength of the UN's normative agenda, recently given a substantial boost by the GA's adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

These are all recommendations which would no doubt be supported by all BAFUNCS members, who in turn will certainly find much to reflect upon in this report in terms of their own careers. And, if anyone has not yet contributed their reflections to the UNCRP, they may be inspired by it to make up for lost time...

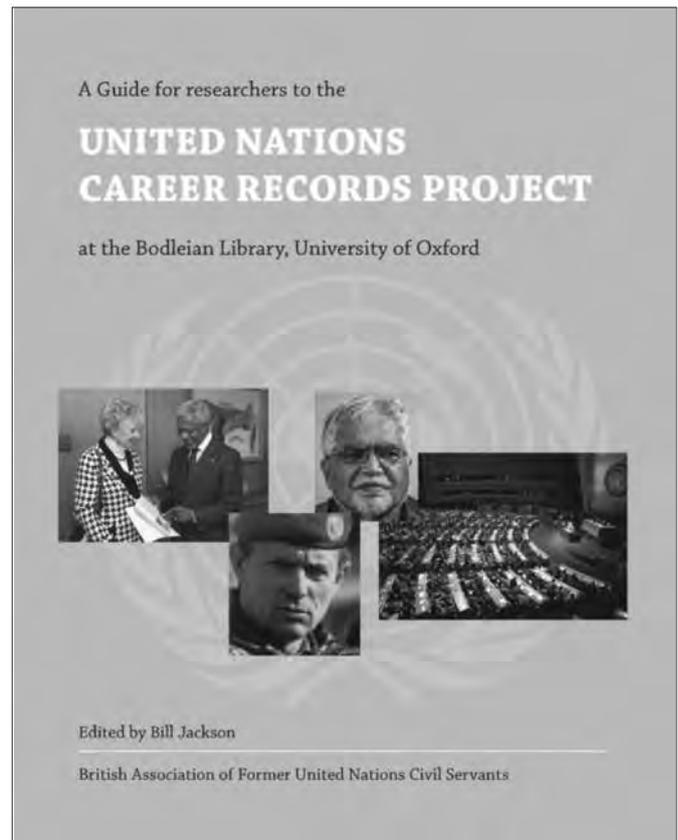
By the time you read this or shortly after, Bill Jackson's new Guide to the UN Career Records Project at the Bodleian Library will be available on BAFUNCS' website for students and researchers – and for you! The outcome of some three years' work, it contains short 'biographies' and brief details of the memoirs, papers, reports, photographs, etc contributed to the Library by 506 men and women, almost all former UN and Specialised Agency staffers, Blue Berets or UK representatives to the UN system.

The great majority of the contributors are of course British, but some twenty nationalities feature in all. Bodleian researchers can read of 'Mohicans' like Walter Hoffmann and Bill Tanzer; the malariologist Jim Cullen's conscious exposure of his arms and thighs to hungry mosquitoes; Colin Everard's novels on air safety, based on his time with ICAO; Dame Iris Murdoch's work for UNRRA; autobiographies by George Bishop, Duncan Forbes, Kenneth Sargent and Martin Barber among others; Brigadier Michael Harbottle's proposals for peace-making roles for the world's armies; Molly Bruce's work with Eleanor Roosevelt for women and human rights. But perhaps nobody so wittily encapsulated as the late Herbert Thruscutt the shared experience of so many of us: "to be an effective [World] Bank staff member one does not need to be a genius: one needs only to be professionally competent, to be unfrustratable and to have the digestive system of a yak!"

To ensure accessibility and keep costs to the minimum, the Guide is being published primarily as an e-book. Only 150 copies will be printed, principally for the Copyright and other specialist libraries, reviewers and UN archives. It is deliberately a non-commercial venture, to be freely available to universities: as a condition of gratis use of some of the many photographs, it will not be on sale. But, with a few clicks on your PC, you can have it at your fingertips.

We all recognise that there were giants in the system before us, on whose shoulders we tried to build: many of them also feature in the Guide – Sir David Owen, Sir Robert Jackson, Dame Margaret Joan Anstee, Wilfred Jenks, George Ivan Smith to name but some. Most of us probably see ourselves as pygmies by comparison: nevertheless a few hundred of us deservedly feature also!

Look at or download the Guide from the link on BAFUNCS' website – or have someone find it for you. Then look at its index of names, and/or its index of keywords. Just to dip into, or for a longer, nostalgic session, you may find it compelling reading!



Discussion of the Evidence Report in the House of Lords last October. Report next page



Richard Jolly and
Michael Askwith

The launch event of the *UN at 70 Evidence Report* duly and successfully took place in a House of Lords Committee Room on 20th October, under the chairmanship of Lord Hannay, Chairman of the UN All Party Parliamentary Group on the UN (UN APPG) and after an introduction by the IDS Director, Professor Melissa Leach.

It was presented in the context of a broader and more contemporary discussion on "The UN and the UK: Post-Brexit Implications" led by Sir Richard Jolly on development cooperation, Sir Adam Roberts on humanitarian action and Sir Jeremy Greenstock on peace and security.

They each provided brief summaries of the conclusions and recommendations of the three UN at 70 Witness Seminars, and their potential post-Brexit implications. This was followed by over an hour of questions and answers.

Committee Room 1 of the House of Lords was at its full capacity of about 50 people, made up of speakers, representatives of the House of Lords and Commons, BAFUNCS, UNA-UK, IDS, academia, non-governmental organisations and private individuals.

For the meeting, two documents with copies of website downloads from IDS and UNA-UK were distributed, as follows:

1. IDS communications on Parliament event, 20 October 2016
 - 1) Summary of the event (from <http://www.ids.ac.uk/news/renewed-focus-on-un-could-help-secure-uk-s-new-role-on-world-stage>);
 - 2) Launch of the IDS Evidence Report on the UN at 70, and the UK (from <http://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/the-un-at-70-and-the-uk-development-cooperation-humanitarian-action-and-peace-and-security-lessons-from-experience-and-policy-recommendations>);
 - 3) Hand-out for the event, with the list of speakers and a summary of the contents of the Evidence Report, and authors.
2. UNA-UK article on the event (from <https://www.una.org.uk/news/una-uk-co-hosts-parliamentary-meeting-uks-role-un>).

Funds from BAFUNCS (£300) and a research grant to IDS enabled 75 hard copies of the report to be printed, of which 35 were distributed at the event to interested participants including article authors, with the balance being sent by mail by the printers to those authors who could not be present and to selected organisations (universities and university libraries, UN organisations, UK government, Think Tanks and NGOs. A pdf copy of the on-line final version of the Report is attached. IDS has already posted the Report on-line, for broad and world-wide distribution.

This final stage now brings to a most satisfactory close the UN at 70 Witness Seminar programme, with the caveat that the final versions of the WS reports still need to be deposited in the Weston (Bodleian) Library.

Our sincere thanks are due to all those who contributed articles, for the invaluable support of the IDS, UNA-UK, BAFUNCS, the Weston (Bodleian) Library and King's College, London.

In financial terms, the WS programme was made possible by contributions from DFID under its Accountable Grant to IDS for WS1 and the Evidence Report (approx £15,000), as well as to All Souls College for WS2 (approx £3,500) and UNA-UK/FCO for WS3.

In terms of participation, the WS programme brought together about 240 people for four days of stimulating presentations, discussions and sharing of experiences (WS1 - 40, WS2 - 80 and WS3 120.) and about 40 panelists/speakers.

In conclusion, it is our hope that the Witness Seminar programme and the UN Evidence Report process has not only been an enriching one for all who participated in it, but may also contribute in one way or another in the formulation and review of policies affecting the UN system, and the UK's contribution to it as it enters its next stage.

