



international federation of social workers

Newsletter

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March 1989

THE PRESIDENT REPORTS

The International President, Prof. Gayle Gilchrist James (Canada) started reporting regularly to Officers and Members of the Executive Committee.

In her first report dated December 1988, Gayle James provided ample information on the following issues among others:

1. A letter of thanks was received from the Catholic Agency for World Development TROCAIRE in "grateful appreciation for the generous contribution of 8.100 Swiss Francs provided by the IFSW/LGPSU through the good offices of Bwanika Bbaale and the National Association of Social Workers of Uganda...". The funds were transferred to an important Women's Development Programme in Uganda.
2. The President and the Treasurer Richard Ramsay (Canada) attended the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW-USA) Symposium in Philadelphia, November 9 - 12, 1988 as honoured guests of the NASW leadership. The NASW President, Suzane Dworak-Peck is concomitantly IFSW Vice President for North America. At the Symposium, the President met various social workers who are policy makers and project directors in the field of AIDS and arranged to have some of them recruited for the session entrusted to IFSW at the V International Conference on AIDS in Montreal, Canada, June 4 - 9, 1989.
3. The President intends to visit the members of the IFSW Human Rights Commission and, if possible, all detained social workers in the Africa and Asia & Pacific Regions early in 1990. The Treasurer, Dick Ramsay, will also undertake international visits, mainly with a view to field-test a universal conceptual framework for social work.
4. The President, Gayle James, announced the publication by ICSW-Canada of the book "René Sand and the Culture of Human Values", brought out to mark the 60th anniversary of the First International Conference of Social Work. It includes the history of IFSW's early development.
5. The work of the Search Committee for a new Secretary General proceeds under the President's guidance.
6. All present and immediate past IFSW Representatives at the United Nations in New York, Geneva and Vienna as well as the Council of Europe, will be awarded medals as a token of the Federation's recognition of and gratitude for their invaluable voluntary work. Gayle James will be a speaker at the Social Work Day organised by the IFSW/U.N. team at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on March 29, 1989 during which the medals will be given to those IFSW Representatives who can be present and, in the case of the late founder and leader of the New York team Jack Kamaiko, to his widow.

NEWS FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL AND THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

Preparations for the 11th International Symposium in Buenos Aires in 1990. IFSW's first in Latin America, were given some impetus by the Associate Secretary General's visit to Argentina in November 1988. Organising an important international event requires the right mixture of commitment and ingenuity fortunately found among the Argentinian organisers who struggle against a backdrop of non-existent government funds and their own association's relative pauperdom. However, none of this dampens the Argentine social workers' enthusiasm and inventiveness. The 1990 International Conference is headed for success albeit within a simpler framework than that of past Symposia held in more affluent countries.

The Secretary General, Andrew Mouravieff-Apostol, arranged for a session to be held under IFSW auspices at the V International Conference on AIDS in Montreal, Canada. It will center on presentation and discussions by a panel of social workers from all IFSW regions chaired by President Gayle James.

The Secretary General is also engaged at present in discussions with WHO officials concerning the written Joint IFSW/WHO Project on AIDS he submitted to this U.N. Specialized Agency for the training and optimum utilisation of social work counsellors on AIDS.

In Europe (at Strasbourg) the Secretary General and the Associate Secretary General represented the Federation at a consultation called by the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts in the Field of Human Rights with a view to preparing a Draft Resolution on Human Rights and the Training of Social Workers for presentation to the Council's Committee of Ministers. IFSW's submission on the subject was well received. As a result of the Consultation the Federation's Human Rights Commission as well as its European Member Associations and Representative at the Council of Europe, acting in conjunction with the International Association of Schools of Social Work, will prepare a Human Rights component for the curricula of schools of social work in the region. Similar action could also be undertaken at a later date in other IFSW regions.

Following a telephone call from Moscow, the Assistant Editor of the Moscow "New Times" visited the IFSW Geneva office on February 15, 1989 at the urging of the USSR Foreign Ministry's Mr. J. Nekrassoff who attended the 1988 Symposium in Stockholm.

He wanted to know how, for the first time, the Soviet Union could train its own social workers who, upon graduation, could form a USSR association of social workers and apply for membership in IFSW. At the end of a lengthy interview with the Secretary General about the Federation, its history and present concerns, he presented the Secretariat with a copy of a recent article in "New Times" by Mr. Nekrassoff deploring Soviet Russia's isolation from social work in the world and calling for "contacts with the European Centre for Social Welfare Training and Research, the International Federation of Social Workers and similar bodies". The article added that it was high time for the Soviet Union to drop its indifference towards social and humanitarian NGO's, most of which do eminently useful work.

NEWS FROM IFSW REGIONS

LATIN AMERICA

The Vice President for Latin America, Lic. Carlos A. Pascanán, is preparing the advance notice of the Buenos Aires World Conference of Social Workers, the IFSW XI International Symposium, to be held early in August 1990, which will be sent out in April 1989. The theme of the World Conference is *Políticas Sociales y Trabajo Social: Su Inserción ante las Situaciones de Cambio y Crisis* (Social Policy and Social Work: Their Contribution in Times of Change and Crisis). Both Carlos Pascanán and Luiz R. Fernandes, President of the *Federación Argentina de Asociaciones de Profesionales del Servicio Social*, who attended the World Conference and the Grant Fund Seminar for participants from developing countries in Stockholm in 1988, have considerable experience running national and regional events. This ability was demonstrated by their organisation of the ICSW Latin American Regional Seminar in Mar del Plata in November 1988 where the IFSW Associate Secretary General was present. Carlos Pascanán plans to attend several meetings and seminars during 1989 in Latin America to promote IFSW's work in the Region as well as the 1990 Conference in Buenos Aires.

EUROPE

IFSW Vice President Paul Dolan is seeking views from Member Associations all over the world on the future structure of IFSW. He leads a small committee charged with producing proposals later this year. The European Region is also considering a test project to strengthen its internal functioning by establishing a regional executive.

Welcome exchanges of minutes and other news have taken place with the European elements of ICSW and IASSW.

The English text of the Coccozza Report – a comparison of social work training in European Community countries – has now been prepared. The report is expected to be printed by the European Commission, and copies distributed (English/French) to IFSW Member Associations.

IFSW Executive Member Njal Petter Svensson has made a short study visit to Hungary, including contact with members of the Hungarian Association of Social Workers.

IFSW MEETINGS

The 1989 Joint Regional Seminar of the Asian and Pacific Association of Social Work Education (APASWE) and IFSW-Asia & Pacific will be held in Singapore August 30 – September 2, 1989. The IFSW Executive Committee chose Singapore as the venue of its present year's annual meeting in order to strengthen links between the Federation and social workers and their associations in the Asia & Pacific Region.

The 9th IFSW European Seminar will be held in Basel, Switzerland, September 19 - 21, 1989. It will be preceded by a programme for social workers from southern European countries in Zurich, 14 - 16 September 1989. Almost certainly, a special memorial session for Jane Addams, who 100 years ago opened Hull House for migrants in Chicago, will be held on the day preceeding the Seminar (18 September) to honour this 1931 Nobel Prize winner. Workshops will address issues such as what happens to those left behind by people who migrate, involuntary migration and refugee issues, adult education for migrants, health issues, marital and family problems, women migrants, racism, migration in social work education, among others.

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NEWS FROM MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

AUSTRALIA

Inspired by the IFSW, the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) is working on an Australian Human Rights Policy for Social Workers. The need for a statement which could be used as a guideline for dealing with Australia's Ethnic Minority Group, the Aboriginal people, as well as with migrants from many different countries, was keenly felt.

AASW's other main task at the present time is the compilation of documents aimed at different

population groups which include a clear definition of social work, information on the social work career for school leavers, a pamphlet on social workers and social work services which will provide information to the community at large, and another containing an analysis of social workers in various occupational settings. The Association's most pressing political concern involves the country's increasing shift towards privatisation of health and welfare services, which appears to be a trend in First World countries, and which will affect the delivery of services.

AUSTRIA

The Austrian Association of Social Workers will hold an International Seminar 25 - 28 October 1989 on the impact of the European Common Market on the conditions of social work practice.

CANADA

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) continues to be a very active on a number of important professional and social policy issues. It recently drafted a Mission Statement describing its mandate in order to provide leadership nationally for pursuing excellence in social work practice and addressing social policies and to represent Canadian social workers internationally.

CASW is working on the following projects:

- (1) AIDS – The Board established an Ad-Hoc Committee on AIDS and social work practice. The Spring 1989 edition of the Association's journal will focus on AIDS - related issues.
- (2) Continuing education for social workers. - New approaches are being developed including certificate programmes for social workers in remote areas.
- (3) Family violence. – Here CASW joined nine other national professional associations to develop and promote co-ordinated interdisciplinary services to those suffering from domestic violence. A Phase 1 Report has been issued. It examines interdisciplinary practice, barriers preventing professionals from working together, and new interdisciplinary approaches tried at community level. There is an increased commitment by teachers, members of the police, doctors, nurses, psychologists, clergy, hospital administrators, lawyers and social workers to co-ordinate their services when addressing different forms of family violence.

CASW President Marian Walsh and Mary Hegan, CASW Executive Director, appreciated the invitation to participate in the November 1988 NASW national conference in Philadelphia, USA. As always, they received inspiration and new ideas from visiting social work colleagues in other countries.

CHILE

Chile held its V National Congress on the theme "Professional Social Work and its Effects" (*Servicio Social Profesional y sus Proyecciones*), 9 - 11 December 1988 in Valparaíso.

Especial relevancia dió al evento la participación de las delegaciones de Argentina, Uruguay y Brasil. Su asistencia contribuyó a intercambiar experiencias de Servicio Social y subrayar una vez más la solidaridad hacia el pueblo de Chile, frente a la realidad que vive nuestro país y muy especialmente para con los Asistentes Sociales Chilenos.

The Chilean Colegio continues to follow the case, i.e. the plight of detained social work student Fermín Montes García, co-ordinating assistance to his family and to his lawyer. The Colegio is also actively linked to American and German cultural institutions in the country with a view to establishing language courses for political prisoners who might have to face expulsion from Chile.

COLOMBIA

The Colombian Federation of Social Workers' (FECTS) XII National Delegates Meeting took place 19 - 20 March 1989 in Cali. It was preceded by a one-day seminar on March 18 organised to present and share the conclusions of 6 regional seminars on the effects of the municipal reform on social work (*Reforma Municipal y Trabajo Social*).

A Conference on Professional Ethics for Colombian Social Workers was held in October 1988 in Medellín.

DENMARK

Cash benefits for Danes affected by unemployment or sickness are a politically sensitive issue. These benefits are about to undergo further radical changes. The following two observations have a bearing on present trends:

1. Economic cuts particularly affect families with children and, above all, single parent families.
2. Denmark has witnessed a discussion on cash benefits for several years. The view that benefits create passiveness and turn users into clients has been advanced repeatedly. The core of the matter, however, is that while users are entitled to long-term financial contributions, they are not entitled to jobs or training which would allow them to re-enter the labour market and achieve self-supporting status in society.

A new bill is under discussion in Parliament which would oblige municipalities to provide jobs for 18 and 19-year-old recipients of cash benefits from their first day of unemployment.

The new rules governing young people give rise to major sociopolitical discussions on responsibility and solidarity in the light of rising youth unemployment figures. How can sufficient work places be found even with the help of employers and trade unions? Moreover, it is being discussed that the right to receive benefits should have as its corollary the duty to work or to participate in training schemes. The crux of the matter, however, is whether young people and other recipients of cash benefits will be offered acceptable conditions to carry out their duty.

FINLAND

Three hundred and fifty members of the Finnish Association (SOSTL) celebrated their 40th anniversary on March 5. At a ceremony in Finlandia House, Helsinki, former presidents of the Association helped put the finishing touches to the SOSTL flag before it was raised. Also 8 founder members were presented with commemorative medallions.

IFSW's greetings were sent by the Secretary General and IFSW was represented by the Vice President of the European Region, Paul Dolan. In addition to national dignitaries, representatives of social work associations in Norway and Sweden were also present. The Finnish Association, now the fourth largest in Europe, is still growing in numbers, despite (and because of) perceived unacceptably low social work salary levels.

GHANA

From 31 January to 3 February, 1989 a seminar was held by the Ghana National Association of Teachers in Accra. This annual event brought together twenty Heads of Ghana Education Service Social Workers and their senior staff who evaluated their work and adopted new strategies for 1990. One of the main issues concerned drug abuse and its control in Ghanaian schools. The Education Social Workers are affiliate members of the Ghana Association of Social Workers (GASOW).

GASOW's National President, Professor D.N.A. Nortey and Secretary-General S.O. Komierter played important roles in the Seminar, the former lecturing on juvenile delinquency and the latter, participating in the workshop on drug abuse and helping to finalise the Constitution of the Education Social Workers Association.

IRELAND

The Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) thanks those Associations who sent Christmas and New Year greetings and extends its good wishes to all for 1989.

At present IASW is busy preparing for the Annual General Meeting and Conference to be held at the beginning of May in Kinsale, County Cork. Current President Ms. Vicki Somers will leave office at the end of the AGM and will be succeeded by Ms. Eilish Walsh who is at present Vice President for Qualifications and Standards. Ms. Walsh works in the field of adult psychiatry and has been one of the principal IASW negotiators with the Department of Health on statutory registration of social workers.

Ms. Margaret Fitzgerald who was the Association's first employed staff member has recently retired from her post as Secretary.

I.A.S.W. jointly with the Department of Health, ran a H.I.V. counselling workshop from February 27 to March 3, 1989 for Senior Health Board Social Workers. This was a pilot workshop which will hopefully be repeated for others in the profession. Augusta McCabe, immediate past IFSW President, is actively involved with this development through her work in the Department of Health as Social Work Adviser.

The I.A.S.W. Women's Issues Committee jointly with the Department of Social Administration and Social Work, University College Dublin, is running a seminar on "Social Work and Women" in March.

Government cuts in services are still affecting social workers and their clients and ways in which to cope with these cutbacks will form the theme of the I.A.S.W. conference in May.

NIGERIA

After a disastrous financial year 1987 during which secretariat expenses had to be cut to a bare minimum which, however, did not stop the Nigeria Association of Social Workers from being active thanks to the efforts of its elected Officers, 1988 witnessed a consolidation of the Association. The Council Meeting was held in June and the 10th Annual Conference / Workshop on the theme "The role of Social Workers in National Development", in November. Also, three NASW members were sponsored for the National Seminar on Social Work organised by the University of Ibadan to study the possibility of establishing a Master Degree Programme in Social Work.

Work on other important issues such as the accreditation of social workers is being carried out by the Association's Executive and the National General Secretary Alhaji Goindin-Ninuola Idowu despite severe financial problems due to a dwindling annual subvention from the Federal Government.

NORWAY

From Norway the following request for comments is made: IFSW is revising its Code of Ethics, and formulating it as a Declaration / Convention. This important work is being done substantially by members of NOSO, who would welcome responses to the 1988 Draft Convention (Information to Lars Gunnar Lingas, c/o NOSO, Postboks 696, Sentrum, 0106 Oslo 1).

The Norwegian Association NOSO has also recently twinned with two Associations in Africa – in Benin and Tanzania.

SPAIN

The Spanish Association – Consejo General de Colegios Oficiales de Diplomados en Trabajo Social y Asistentes Sociales published an impressive dossier on manifold important activities carried out since 1983 which include study courses, seminars and several agreements between the Consejo General and the Spanish authorities. Training for social agency heads and officials in research and documentation and the administration of social services is the latest project undertaken by the Consejo General.

TANZANIA

The Tanzania Association of Social Workers is organising a workshop to prepare Tanzanian social workers for their role in the countrywide effort to combat AIDS. The workshop on "The Role of Social Work Professionals in Combating the Scourge of AIDS in Tanzania" will be held in Mbeya 4 - 5 April, 1989.

The main objective of the workshop is to prepare a core group of professionals who upon their return to their respective regions will work with professionals of related disciplines in the establishment of home care and counselling teams so that systematic follow-up of AIDS patients and HIV-infected individuals and their families can be instituted. When this is accomplished, the Association is expected to form a link between the National AIDS Control Programme and social work practitioners in the country.

Social workers are expected to address such risk behaviours as rape and incest which render women and children specially vulnerable. Other risk behaviours include female circumcision; widow inheritance where a surviving brother or sister is expected to take over, inherit or marry the bereaved sister – or brother-in-law; the ritual cleansing which may involve sex with the widowed spouse regardless of the cause of death.

During the workshop the Association will help participants review the various counselling skills such as crisis, grief, alcoholism and reproductive health counselling, behaviour therapy and, finally, community organisation and development. Policy and ethical issues in AIDS will also be explored. The reviews will be brief but well targeted so as to encourage participants to work on them on their own after the workshop. Participants' attention will be drawn to skills which are appropriate for certain situations in AIDS care but not so for others given sociopolitical and cultural constraints. Possibilities of group therapy with seropositive individuals will be discussed and alternatives explored. Gender issues will likewise be examined.

This is the Association's first serious effort with respect to AIDS and it feels that it lacks experience. The Association thanks the Australian Association of Social Workers for sending valuable information and would like to hear from other Associations about their activities in this field.

UGANDA

Social workers from Mozambique (5) and Angola (2) visited Uganda under the auspices of the Save the Children Fund/U.K. They came to share with Ugandan social workers their experience in the care of children who have been involved in armed conflicts.

Officials of the National Association of Social Workers of Uganda accompanied the social workers during their visits to projects of the Save the Children Fund in Uganda. The exchange of experience as well as the personal contacts strengthened the links between social workers and between the three countries.

UNITED KINGDOM

Training. The Government last year rejected proposals to increase the length of social work training to 3 years. But specific training money has been made available for particular areas of work, notably child care. There is growing concern among social work educators at the implications for the U.K. of 1992: it is feared that with only two years training British social workers will be at a disadvantage compared with most of the rest of their European colleagues.

Complaint Procedures. The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) has produced advice to social service organisations on how to deal professionally with complaints about decision-making. No national procedure exists, so the BASW initiative helps to establish widespread standards.

Child Protection. Following the Cleveland scandal, where large numbers of allegedly sexually abused children were removed from their parents, wide-ranging legislative changes are going through Parliament. The effect is broadly to reduce the risk of children being removed arbitrarily, but BASW has argued that the Government has grossly underestimated the costs, in time and money, of the proposed changes. They are narrowly legalistic, excluding provisions to support families.

USA

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is supporting a campaign by the Census Bureau to encourage all U.S. residents to be counted in the 1990 census.

The Bureau is asking churches, schools, social service organisations, the media and others for help in reaching segments of the population, especially minorities, who are often undercounted.

A complete and accurate census is important for social work clients and others, because billions of federal dollars are distributed under many programmes on the basis of population.

Data are used, among other things, to identify areas requiring bilingual education, to determine compliance with the Voting Rights Act and to develop programmes to reduce unemployment.

Social workers and others need to stress that answers to the census questions are completely confidential.

The federal human services budget, health and mental health care, long-term care and child welfare services are the priority issues in NASW's work with Congress this year according to its legislative agenda approved by the Board of Directors in January. The agenda, drafted by the staff of the Legislative Affairs programme with oversight from the Board's Legislative Committee, also includes six other "issues of concern" that are expected to come before the 101st Congress. These issues include:

Family and Medical Leave. The lack of adequate parental and medical leave for workers leads to serious economic, emotional and psychological stress on families — stress which also adversely affects productivity. Family and medical leave proposals before Congress would require companies and other employers to provide unpaid leave due to the birth, adoption or severe illness of a child; serious illness of a parent; or the worker's own illness. NASW supports passage of this legislation in 1989.

Pay Equity. Labour force data reflect persistent differences in pay between men and women doing comparable types of work. The rise in the number of single-parent, female-headed households living in poverty demands that pay discrimination be eliminated. NASW, therefore, supports the passage of legislation that would establish a commission to examine pay equity in the federal employment system.

Homelessness. At least three million Americans are homeless — nearly half of them families with children. NASW supports legislation designed to provide homeless persons with needed services, as well as to prevent homelessness by providing special assistance to those at risk.

The collection of hate crime statistics, factors which affect student performance and restoration of adequate funding for the Social Services Block Grant are other issues of major concern.

NASW and 50 other groups in a national coalition are fighting what they view as an attempt by the federal Health Care Financing Administration to sink hard-won nursing home reforms ordered by Congress in 1987. Among those reforms: requirements for nursing homes with 120 or more beds to employ a full-time social worker with at least a BSW degree or "similar professional qualification". Staff without social work degrees should be required to have one year of supervised social work experience in health care and to receive consultation from a qualified social worker. The other staffing requirement directed the Secretary of Health and Human Services to maintain social work consultation and supervision requirements "at least as stringent" as those already in force.

NASW has successfully lobbied for inclusion of the staffing measures in the nursing home reform law. They are to take effect on October 1, 1990, but HCFA did not, in NASW's view, adequately cover the consultation and supervision requirement in its regulations.

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Member Association and all those who met our colleagues from Aruba at the Stockholm Conference will be pleased to hear that the Aruba Association lodged an application for membership with IFSW which will be considered by the Executive Committee at its next meeting in August 1989.

IFSW ACTIVITIES IN THE INTERNATIONAL SPHERE

The Chair of the IFSW team at UN/New York, Dr. Celia B. Weisman reports:

"Plans are well under way for the Seventh Annual Social Work Day at the **United Nations**, which will take place on Wednesday, March 29, 1989. This annual meeting attracts about 200 social workers and becomes a way of interpreting the work of the United Nations to the social work profession and of alerting social workers to the means by which they can collaborate with the NGO's on humanitarian issues of concern to all of us. This year's topic is: **"The impact of the Environment on the Human Condition: An International Human Rights Problem"**.

Our keynote speaker on "Our Endangered Planet" will be Jean Claude Faby, Deputy Director, UN Environmental Programme. Following his address, there will be two case studies from countries where efforts are being made at preservation and environmental improvement. There will be presentations from the Ambassadors of Brazil and Canada.

We will be most fortunate in having our IFSW President, Gayle Gilchrist James attend this meeting. She will bring greetings and do a wrap-up on the implications of this pressing issue for social work".

Another member of the IFSW team at UN / New York, Bertram A. Weinert, is trying to promote intergenerational understanding and awareness of the need for such understanding among social workers.

In Vienna, Marlies Lengacher is helping Monika Vyslouzil carry out her heavy representational duties on behalf of the Federation.

Monika has been elected Treasurer of the Vienna-based NGO Committee on the Family. The Committee continues its study of family-related issues and undertakes in-depth preparations for a yet to be declared U.N. International Year of the Family.

Michèle Aubry of Renens, Switzerland is the newly appointed IFSW Representative at UN / Geneva. Ms. Aubry chose human rights and labour issues — employment / unemployment, working conditions and related matters — as priorities for action and intervention. She plans to work closely with the International Labour Office. Her address is: Rue du Bugnon 2A, 1020 Renens, CH.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

HUMAN RIGHTS

In its February 1989 Newsletter Amnesty International reports that 2029 prisoners under sentence of death in Pakistan stand to benefit from the new Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's request to President Ghulam Ishaq Khan made last December, to commute all death sentences to life imprisonment. The President appears to have stayed executions immediately and several hundred sentences have already been commuted.

Repression seemingly intensified over the past months in the Philippines. One of the country's major human rights groups – Task Force Detainees – is under attack, both verbal and physical. Two of its workers, Gary Lim and Susan Aniban, were detained and tortured before their release. Both were forced to sign false confessions. An unsuccessful attempt was made on the life of a third, Bobby Montevillo. Human rights activists belonging to other organisations are likewise persecuted and two have disappeared.

"I was tortured through water cure and forced to falsely incriminate myself and others. I am falsely accused of owning a "32-caliber pistol". Thus spoke social welfare and human rights worker Noel Villalba after his release on July 15, 1988. He is Coordinator of the Asian Committee for People's Organization, based in Hong Kong and was arrested during a professional visit to his country, the Philippines.

In Malaysia, Sebil John Joseet, one of the detainee social workers on whose behalf IFSW Member Associations interceded, does not enjoy unrestricted freedom after his liberation in 1988. He is not allowed to leave the country to visit his wife and eight-year-old daughter in London, is restricted to his home area, confined to his home between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. and, furthermore, forced to report to the police every month. On the other hand his wife feels that she cannot return to Malaysia where she would almost certainly be detained.

For further information on these and other cases, contact Ms. Ruth H. Wilson, Secretary of the Committee for Chilean Inquiry, 415 Grand Street, Apt. 1905, New York, N.Y. 10002. Ruth Wilson is the North American Representative on the IFSW Human Rights Committee.

CHILDREN

On March 8, 1989, at its 45th session, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights adopted the text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and recommended its adoption to the General Assembly. Ten years of hard and collaborative work between the Working Group set up by the Commission, a number of concerned Governments and many eminently concerned Non-Governmental Organisations were brought to a successful end. The Convention is not perfect. However, even if in some respects it does not attain standards set by past agreements, such as the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions, it represents an international consensus which can but benefit children. Implementation of this new human rights instrument will be ensured by a Committee on the Rights of the Child which will be established to monitor the application of the Convention.

AIDS

The heterosexual spread of AIDS in Africa is linked to female circumcision, according to new studies. A U.S. report finds a predominance of women victims of AIDS in regions where female circumcision is practised, and similar findings are reported by a Nigerian NGO, the Nigerian Women's Centre.

(International Dateline, November 1988)

ALSO:

Dr. Halfdan Mahler, former Director-General of the World Health Organization, is the new Secretary-General of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

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More than 50 foreign ministers attended the January 1989 Paris Conference on Chemical Weapons Use at which more than 100 states were represented. Clearly, the aim of the conference was to reinforce the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting the use of poison gas in warfare, and it was called in response to the repeated use of chemical weapons in the recent Gulf War.

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By August 1988, response to a request for views and proposals concerning an International Year of the Family had reached the United Nations from 45 Governments. Thirty-nine out of the 45 were in favour of holding such a year.

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