



CF/RAI/USAA/DB01/HS/2004-00255

Expanded Number **CF/RAI/USAA/DB01/HS/2004-00255**

External ID

Title

Article in UNICEF Staff News from E.J.R. Heyward, Charles Egger, Jack Charnow. No date, sometime 1982?

Date Created
12-Oct-2004 at 1:04 PM

Date Registered
12-Oct-2004 at 1:04 PM

Date Closed

Primary Contact

Owner Location

Home Location

Current Location/Assignee

Record & Archive Manage Related Functions=80669443

CF/RAF/ZW/B0112-____-000056549 (In Container)

Record & Archive Manage Related Functions=80669443 since 12-Oct-2004

F12: Status Certain? **No**

F13: Record Copy? **No**

d01: In, Out, Internal Rec or Rec Copy

Contained Records

Container

Date Published

Fd3: Doc Type - Format

Da1:Date First Published

Priority

Record Type **A02 HIST CORR ITEM**

Document Details **Record has no document attached.**

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superior by many ranks, levels, steps and rungs, sank irremediably a little lower. In one of the few static moments the *Watansi Standard* enjoyed in the flailing arms of his persecutor, he tried again to read the headline: "UNICEF hits out boldly at UNDP bureaucracy." For a brief but intoxicating moment he wondered whether truth might constitute the best defence. But the sight of the Co-ordinator's engorged face and palpitating shirt persuaded him that discretion and silence were roughly equivalent.

The embarrassing part was that he had no explanation of any kind to hand. The headline unquestionably referred to the events of the previous evening at Watansi Airport. Other than the fact that the staff member/driver/messenger/secretary had gained the pouch, lost the car, and somehow arranged through the Secretary, Water to have the UNPD driver removed to jail, the actual course of events at the airport were still obscure to the acting liaison officer. He felt that given the peculiar environment of Watansi, they were likely to remain obscure, perhaps for ever.

Fortunately for the acting liaison officer, an enigmatic expression of studied concern

these dark times, it was refreshing to see that more for less equalled approximately less for more and *vice versa*."

Under the sub-title "Incident," the story continued: "Admiring crowds, gathered in the VIP lounge to welcome the UN visitor became carried away with enthusiasm, and in the temporary confusion a UNICEF officer was perceived sprinting for the exit with a large sack, pursued by a colleague from UNDP. Stopping to sock his pursuer on the jaw, and shouting energetically "Down with bureaucracy" the UNICEF staff member received a standing ovation from the crowd, while the UNDP was led quietly away. It was later reported that a young boy fishing on the Watansi River had been consumed by a crocodile." The rest of the story was culled from wire-service reports of dubious relevance. It was illustrated with a blurred photograph of the UNDP Resident Co-ordinator at a State House reception with his arm around the wife of the WHO public health engineer. The reason for his disenchantment now became apparent.

"Higher authorities," normally the slowest variety to respond, could be guaranteed to move swiftly where the press



be fully acquainted with the full on-the-ground picture, if such disrespect could be countenanced given his esteemed and privileged position. It was difficult to see how this arrangement worked: situation, reporter asks question, pad at ready, pen poised. Acting liaison officer: "Excuse me while I telephone Mr. Boundary." Reporter: "What does he know about it?" Answer: "Nothing".... *Watansi Standard* story: "UN knows nothing, according to UNICEF." It seemed like Catch 22. "Can't you do something?" he asked the Nairobi programme officer, who promptly rang off.

There was no doubt in the acting liaison officer's mind that action of some kind was necessary. The UNDP Resident Co-ordinator wanted a full retraction in the *Watansi Standard*, preferably tomorrow. Talk of Mr. Boundary's office would be unlikely to soothe his ruffled feelings, not to mention those of the WHO public health engineer, who was probably even now demanding a new posting and a D-1 to go with it. Warily, the acting liaison officer summoned the staff member, showed him the offending newspaper story, and asked him what on earth they could do about it.

Hours later, over a self-congratulatory drink in the Hotel Mtansi Bar, the acting liaison officer decided that, after all, there was something to be said for UNICEF's recruitment policies. It had been his privilege during the brief course of his UNICEF career to come across a number of people whom no conceivable selection process known to the annals of personnel history could have placed in that particular slot at that particular time. But there were some who, in spite of actually having the appropriate qualifications, did somehow manage to slip in. The Watansi office staff member was one such individual, whose eminent suitability for his job daily became more apparent.

The escapade of the past two days had not only earned him the undying esteem of

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UNICEF Staff News Feb/March 1982
Thanks

E.J.R. Heyward, Charles Egger, and Jack Charnow send the following "to our former UNICEF colleagues":

We wish to tell you how deeply moved we were by the very warm sentiments, the family feeling, and the good wishes we received at the Good-bye ceremony held for us and for Herman Stein, at Headquarters on 21 December 1981. So many messages came from offices over the world that it is almost impossible, within a reasonable period, to reply to all of them personally and we are, therefore, allowing ourselves to respond through Staff News.

The messages, embracing both personal and working relationships, remind us of the close collaboration we enjoyed over the years from our colleagues in the field in carrying out our responsibilities in New York and the many occasions we have had to share their efforts, labouring together on common problems and at times taking part in more gratifying moments.

We are very much aware that we constitute a symbol of a whole generation of UNICEF staff members, some of whom are no longer with UNICEF, and some who will soon reach retiring age. Particularly when they take their retirement from small offices, it is not possible to duplicate the kind of good-bye we received. They were in the thoughts of those present on 21 December, and we understood that the appreciation expressed in the messages addressed to us belongs in part also to them.

Each of us, along with the others in our generation of UNICEF'ers, have tried to strengthen the field orientation and operational effectiveness of UNICEF. We have also tried to learn from our colleagues and to transmit to our colleagues what we could to help them develop their own abilities to deal with the problems of international co-operation, which have become so much more complicated and comprehensive than when we started in UNICEF. We are encouraged that the messages have recognized this, and we feel confident that it is one of the UNICEF traditions which will continue.

We would also wish to take this opportunity to thank most sincerely all those who prepared with such care and affection the remarkable evening on the 21 December, balancing elements of serious reflection, humour and encouraging thoughts for the future. They will remain in our memory.

We have been gratified to learn that this occasion has given rise to an initiative from the field and the Global Staff Association for the creation of a Fund to help families of colleagues who have died too early to cope with the problem of education of their children.

Working with UNICEF has given us a most satisfying life, for which we are deeply grateful. We are reminded of the title Professor Debré gave to his reminiscences, "L'Honneur de Vivre".