CF/RAI/USAA/DB01/HS/1996-0103

Expanded Number **CF/RAI/USAA/DB01/HS/1996-0103**

External ID **CF/NYH/SEB/HST/1996-0103 ; CF/HST/INT/GEN-002/M**

Title

Interview Louis Gendron by John Charnow: HQ/Field/Europe relations; staff; recruitment; Quotas; UN Rules; Sicault; Supply operations; Junior

Date Created	*Date Registered*	*Date Closed*
25-Oct-1983	**27-Mar-1996**	

Primary Contact
Owner Location **Strategic Information Management Section DPP = 6090**
Home Location **Strategic Information Management Section DPP = 6090**
Current Location/Assignee **History Related Records =60909132 since 20-Mar-2001 at 11:14 AM**

FI2: Status Certain? **No**
FI3: 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.**

Notes

= 017 pp + 1 b
Archive Code Valid Date: 10/30/1989
Professional Officers;Emergencies; View on PersonnelManagment Trends
WU_Staff:
Correspondent:
Main or Elec Storage: Wang Item RSN: 2868 Box Year: Folder File Code: CF/HST/INT/GEN-002/M
Owner Archive Code: CF-NYH-06.H Arch Code V.Date: 30/Oct/1989 Ref Code: CF/NYH/OSEB/HST
F_Folder_Code: CF/HST/INT/GEN-002/M
Cross Ref or Related Record: CF/HST/INT/GEN-002/M
CF/NYH/SEB/HST/1996-0103 ; CF/HST/INT/GEN-002/M

Print Name of Person Submit Image	*Signature of Person Submit*	*Number of images without cover*
JOHN MANFREDI	John Manfredi	18

Blank Page

Back of

Cover Sheet

0509Q...6 December 1984

Interview with Louis Gendron*

New York, 25 October 1983

by John Charnow

TABLE OF CONTENTS

* Mr. Gendron was with UNICEF from 1967 until his retirement in early 1980. His career in UNICEF is discussed in the interview.

(This supplements Mr. Gendron's interview on 2/3 April 1983 conducted by Reinhard Freiberg, in Geneva)

Headquarters/Field relationship

Charnow: In your responsbility as head of Administration, what did you observe to be the relationships between the field offices and the regional offices and between the regional offices and Headquarters? What would you say were the best features and what were the most difficult features of these relationships?

Gendron: In those days there were two tiers of organization - the field offices were under the regional offices and therefore had no direct access to Headquarters. They had to work through the regional offices. Of course that created some friction depending on who was country representative and who was the Regional Director. Some people wanted more independence and some Regional Directors wanted to keep their thumb pretty hard on the field offices. Generally speaking, I don't think this created much of a problem. It was really more a question of egos than a question of substance. Still it was quite possible for headquarters staff to go and visit field offices as long as courtesy was respected in asking the agreement of the Regional Director before going.

I do not remember any great problem. As I say, problems which might have occurred were much more linked to individuals than to the hierarchical structure. Of course, some of our colleagues who were very independent by nature resented not being able to communicate directly with Headquarters, but it was more a problem of individual ego than of structure.

Charnow: What about the relationship between the Regional Directors to Headquarters?

Gendron: Generally speaking, the Regional Directors tended to be more empire builders than the field offices. Why? Possible due to the fact that these Regional Directors were very senior officers. They had the same level as the Deputy Executive Directors, who were also only at D-2 level in those days, and at the same level than than heads of the main divisions at Headquarters. So they were feeling very much at par with them, except for the great individual respect they had of course for Dick Heyward and (possibly to a bit lesser extent) for Charles Egger in view of the great experience of these two gentlemen. There is no doubt that Dick Heyward could have been a P-2, and still would have been greatly respected by all the D-2s.

Charnow: Did you feel sometimes that the field people felt somehow or another they were looked down on by Headquarters people or that Headquarters people felt they were superior? That they felt like second class citizens?

/....

Gendron: That has always been the case in any type of organization. This is inherent to human nature that people at Headquarters think that all the people in the field are morons and vice versa.

Staff composition

Charnow: Let me ask you about the nature of UNICEF staff composition. The feeling is that at the beginning of UNICEF, UNICEF recruited a bunch of young people who had seen the problems of the war and the aftermath and were idealists and so on. At the time you got into UNICEF and the period you saw, what did you feel about the staff we had and the new staff coming in?

Gendron: To some extent that had not considerably changed. There was a pretty slow evolution. There was more professionalism and less enthusiasm. Basically, when I joined UNICEF and even a few years later when I became the Director of Administration, recruitment was still done of people much more on what they had done or could eventually do as human beings than as regard to their education, diplomas.

Thinkers and doers

It is only later that we introduced Planning Officers - people with a great theoretical knowledge of the problems of UNICEF, and Project Officers, who had a very precise type of education related to specific programmes such as water research. They didn't exist when I came into UNICEF. In my opinion a mixture of both was necessary. A mixture of both because you need in any type of organization both thinkers and doers. They have to be mixed and I would not say who should be on the top. It can be a doer or it can be a thinker. There was a certain tendency to leave all the number one posts to the thinkers and I'm not sure I totally agreed with that.

Field office management

In my opinion, an office should always have a good manager. That manager can be the number one or the number two, but they should have a manager. There was the tendency in those days to think that because somebody has an important education and was a big thinker, he was also a good manager. That was a very serious mistake which we made, and repeatedly. It could have been alright if these people had received specific training in staff management before being thrown in as the head of offices when they had no experience, albeit purely academic. The way I saw it is that: either you would put at the top one thinker with no managerial experience, but then he should be given immediately a deputy with qualifications of a good manager. Or you could have a very good manager with no substantive

experience in UNICEF programmes, assisted by some more junior, but more professional, staff very well versed in our theories, approaches, and techniques of implementation.

Charnow: Were these issues - which were certainly related to recruitment, promotions, appointments, and so on - ever discussed as policy issues or was this something that was an undercurrent in your approach and the others in the front office.

Heyward view

Gendron: I would say that that was very much an undercurrent. Let's not forget the hand of Dick Heyward in those days was extremely heavy on all the Administration; as he was feeling that the substance has definite reign over the doers, his views influenced considerably these sectors of appointment and functions. I must say that I was not seeing eye to eye with him on this point.

Recruitment and promotions; staffing levels

Charnow: Tell me about recruitment and appointments made in those days. At the moment you hear stories about the length of time it takes to get through an appointment and promotions committee and write up job descriptions and so on. Was it simpler in your day?

Gendron: It was much simpler. First, the number of posts were not that great and therefore we did not have to look for so many people at the same time. Secondly, once the budget had been approved - the budget gave the number of posts - we could recruit immediately. We were even recruiting before the budget was approved because so far in these days, the budget had never been rejected or even amended by the Board as far as staffing was concerned. Why? Because the budget was extremely carefully planned and the Board knew that we were practically always on a shoestring as regards staff. So the time needed for a recruitment was definitely shortened by that fact, that we would recruit even sometimes before the budget was adopted. Why we could do it was because at that time the system was that we had a global number of posts: Suppose that the budget said that we could have three D-2s, and five D-1s, if we had on our payroll only two D-2s, then we could have six D-1s instead. It was global. At the same time, although the posts were linked to specific jobs and specific locations, we could play absolutely freely with it, meaning we could have easily a country office where there was one P-5, two P-4 and one P-3 on the budget and finish actually having one P-4 and five P-2s. Or we could have even a P-2 against a D-1 job or D-1 against a P-2 job. It didn't matter as long as we would not exceed the total number of

posts in each category. If one category was not filled, we could get another post in the category below. So it was definitely much more simple.

As to the type of people we were recruiting, also it was different. We were looking for a different kind of people. We were looking for people with experience in the field and therefore much of our recruitment was from people who became known by our field officers. They would spot someone from a voluntary agency or elsewhere as being potentially good UNICEF people. We were also recruiting people through advertising, but mostly for technical or administrative jobs.

Nationality quotas

We didn't have at the time so much problem as regard the nationality quotas. Our rule was that the number of people in each nationality should more or less be linked to the contribution their country would make to UNICEF. That explained to a very great extent why we had few international officers from developing countries except those who raised from the national officer category.

Headquarters/Europe relations

Charnow: What would you say about relations with our European office?

Gendron: The relation with the European office was not too different from what it has been lately. The office was in Paris when I became Director of Administration and then I had the task to move it to Geneva which, of course, created some turmoil but eventually proved to be a good operation even from the point of view of management.

Sicault

Before it moved to Geneva, the Director who held the front, Dr. Sicault, was a very strong personality and an old-timer in UNICEF. European office, while it was in Paris, was in fact much more a French office. This is why it was found advisable to move it to Geneva where contacts would be much wider than was possible in Paris. In Paris they were limited to the French government or UNESCO and that was about that. Paris, of course, was a base for travelling all over Europe but not as much as it is in Geneva where are located most of all the UN agencies and where all governments have a mission to the UN.

Charnow: In the years following Sicault there had always been some grey areas between autonomy and the responsibility of the European office. Did you sense friction during the Sicault day, or was

he the kind of person in whom there was such confidence that it really didn't develop that way?

Gendron: Well, I think that it is mostly due to the fact that there was great confidence in Sicault. He was considered as being one of the thinking heads of UNICEF and therefore Headquarters had full confidence in what he was doing. Also the friction was not that much different than it was with the other Regional Offices: they all had a tendency to pretend to be independent from Headquarters and from Sicault this was not much more different than from other Regional Offices.

Paris/Geneva move

Charnow: Let me go back to the move from Paris to Geneva which you discussed in some detail in your interview with Freiberg. Based upon your experience, what general conclusions would you draw for UNICEF in the future when there is a move based?

Gendron: Essentially it is a human problem. The question of moving the furniture, or the change in relations with governments are easy problems to solve. The difficult problem is the human one, as regards UNICEF staff. My judgement on this matter, conformed by the echos of recent move from Geneva to Copenhagen of the Supply Division, to which I did not participate but of which I heard a lot in Geneva lately, is that things have got to be planned very quietly and then acted upon very quickly. If you let it drag too long and if you let it be known too long in advance, then aside from the actual impact that the move will have or the life of individuals, there is a lot of misinformation circulating and the staff gets unsettled and worried, sometimes for no valid reason. Actually, experience proved that the move to Geneva from Paris didn't cause any harm to anybody. All those who moved, moved under conditions which they liked and improved their career, and all those who didn't move found another job. We managed to get them another job, or were found any post in UNESCO. So it has been possible to do it without too much turmoil. But this was achieved only because the matter was kept absolutely secret until the decision was made and action could actually begin. I remember that, for the move from Paris to Geneva I personally did practically all the work and it was kept under lock and key in my own drawer. I didn't even involve my staff at Headquarters because I was afraid of gossiping going on, which would unnecessarily perturb the staff in Paris.

Staff Association

Charnow: What was the relations between the Administration and the Staff Association during your period?

Gendron: Generally speaking, the relationship was quite good with the staff associations. We didn't have a Global Staff Association which was created rather late; I was still with Administration but it was towards the end. We had, therefore, local staff associations, one in New York, one in Paris and one, not in all field offices, but in the larger ones. The relations were generally good. The elected staff representatives were usually responsible persons and therefore could have a very positive dialogue with Administration. Of course there were problems but I must say they were always treated in a very positive manner in the sense that the staff always understood when the limit of yield was reached by Administration and Administration (I think) always responded positively to all the requests of the staff association for studying such and such problems.

UN rules

Charnow: Talking about the limitations of yield, to what extent were important issues bound by the UN system? To what extent did we have the possibilities of exercising autonomy or flexibility in interpretation and how did we use it? In other words were we as flexible as we could be, or did we go by the book?

Gendron: There is always a limit which cannot be exceeded and the limit is when it is very clearly stated in the rules and regulations. But the rules and regulations of the UN of which UNICEF is part and therefore must abide by are limited to the administration of individual staff situations but do not concern management at large. Therefore, UNICEF cannot have special personnel rules, but it can handle staff differently.

Also, at least during my tenure of office, the attitude of Administration was to consider that unless something was strictly prohibited by the books, it was permissible. That, in fact, gave us a kind of flexibility which many other agencies envied. To some extent I think that this freedom, this flexibility, was pretty much due to the fact that we had our own staff administration, our own budgeting and were not subjected to the ACABQ.

Evaluation of staff

Charnow: A question on evaluation of staff members: were we too lenient on people who were not doing their job? Did we allow them to continue or perhaps rise up the hierarchy? What sort of performance responsibility did we hold our people to?

Gendron: When you say "we" it is a bit improper, because the answer to your question varies a lot according to the offices or supervisors considered. You had supervisors who were very

strict with their staff and who would write stern periodic reports on those staff members who were not performing satisfactorily. You had other supervisors who either were too compassionate or who preferred to live without problems and who, for these reasons, were farily lenient in their evaluation of staff.

These differences in evaluation had for result that if the staff members were performing correctly, you would never hear of them; but if you found a staff member who performed poorly and you would have to take administrative or disciplinary measures, you could be absolutely sure that his file was virtually perfect. It was terribly frustrating for Administration. In fact most staff members who perform unsatisfactorily know it, and, to protect themselves manage to get nice testimonies to be put in their files. You can, in fact, spot the bad staff members in just looking at the thickness of their personnel file.

It usually works out that way: during a field trip of the Executive Director or one of his deputy, a mediocre staff member will render some menial service; he usually gets a thank you letter, and request administration that it be placed in his file; then you have a great problem in proving he was an unsatisfactory staff member.

But generally speaking the tendency was that we were quite lenient with the staff. I am sure we can count on our fingers the staff we fired. In fact we never fired anyone except through negotiation by which we had the staff member going on his free will, usually with a very sizeable financial compensation.

Charnow: In retrospect do you think that was really good or bad for UNICEF to have to take into account the human element, possibly to the extent of being lax in holding people responsible, particularly people in key positions, field representatives and so on?

Gendron: There have been very few cases that were very bad. And very few of them relate to staff who were in key positions. I remember only one or two cases of that kind. So I would say it had a negligible impact on the performance of UNICEF.

Supply operations

Charnow: Can we go to a few questions on the supply operations? The principles for purchasing in general have to do with suitability, quality, price, maintenance and so on. I assume you found these principles when you came. In actual application what were the problems in adhering to these principles?

Gendron: First I should remind you that I was in Supply from 1967-1970, quite a long time ago. My memory may not be as accurate as it is for Administration. This being said, I don't remember any great problems in following these criteria for procurement.

Suitability

Charnow: Every once in awhile we would hear stories of lack of suitability of supplies, of supplies not being used and so on. I'm just wondering how you felt about our evaluation system of supply use, trying to correct errors and that sort of thing.

Gendron: Part of this is a question of programming rather than procurement. Did we always buy the things that were actually required for the type of programmes we had? My answer is, Definitely 'no'. This was something that did not work properly. It did not work because a programme is built by someone who may or may not be an expert, but always is there to help the government. In government, the people who are looking for equipment, for example, for hospitals, always want the best and they have access to knowing what the best is because they can get catalogues.

The mistake, in my opinion, is that they ask for equipment and supplies which may be the best but which requires specialized personnel to use them and which is not available. This is why it is found that the best is not always the most suitable. Then, procurement officers and the various specialists at Headquarters were supposed to review these supply lists in order to get what was actually the best for the programme. Very often, when they tried to tone the type of equipment or supplies down, to things simpler than sophisticated equipment, there were loud protests from the field, not necessarily originating from UNICEF staff but more often originating from their counterpart in the government. The result was that you could see some very nice equipment in clinics and hospitals, sitting behind glass windows and never used, but shown to all the visitors to prove that UNICEF was generous. I do not know whether this waste can be avoided because it is rather delicate to go to a developing country and tell the people there that they cannot have a certain piece of equipment because it is much too good for the type of development this country is in: if you say so, you are going to be called a colonialist, a racist, etc. So it is politically difficult to refuse. You could possibly get around that in having the supply list being prepared in the field including this sophisticated machine but being systematically reviewed at Headquarters so that the equipment delivered will be less sophisticated; but there again you would create friction. Thus, as everybody tries to avoid friction, you end with the wrong machines in the wrong place.

Diversions

Charnow: Was there an inordinate amount of diversion of our supplies, or uses not related to children's programmes?

Gendron: No, I would not think so. The equipment and supplies we are sending are limited to the use of certain types of institutions where the children go. Of course, such assistance sometimes helps also the mother, the father and sometimes the whole family. This cannot be avoided as we cannot separate the children from their families. There has been, of course, occasions, mostly in time of emergencies and wars when our equipment has been misused, but you cannot avoid it. There were exceptional cases. The fact that Copenhagen exists has, to a very large extent, avoided this type of misuse because of the possibility of sending packages direct to each of the different programmes. For instance, if you send one single consignment of 2,500 microscopes to India for 2,500 different schools, probably you would get many of these schools where no microscope would arrive. But the way it is done through UNIPAC, which sends a separate shipment for each programme, is extremely effective in preventing that.

Transport

Charnow: Would that same conclusion hold with regard to the use of transport?

Gendron: Possibly not. In the case of transport equipment, I fear that only part of it goes to the programme it is requested for, while a good part of it is not at all directed to UNICEF work. Even without talking of abuse, and there has been much misuse through wars, and other emergencies, I feel that many of the vehicles we are sending are not being used for what they should be. They are very much used for personal needs of government officials, not necessarily for their official use.

Charnow: Are there solutions to that that we haven't tried or should try?

Gendron: Maybe, but I would like to do a little bit of thinking before giving you an answer to that. I remember thinking about solutions but they do not come to my mind at the moment.

Guide lists

Charnow: What about guide lists? Have they been valuable?

Gendron: Very. The Guide lists is the best defense a programme officer has against a government official who wants too much.

Local procurement

Charnow: To get back to the procurement where you say you were not aware of any problems, have there been any pressures on the part of some of the manufacturers of some of the countries that we were not able to resist in terms of buying things, or are our procedures pretty protective?

Gendron: There was some pressure from developing countries to effect local procurement and UNICEF gave in in a number of instances. But I think for a pretty good reason. After all, local procurement is another way to help a country, and if the local price is higher than for imported foods usually it is compensated by time saving, on shipping; there is also a further advantage in the fact that something which is locally manufactured can usually be maintained or repaired much more easily than if it were imported.

Charnow: Those are positive statements about local procurement. Somehow or another I had the impression that there is a certain amount of resistance in the Supply Division.

Gendron: There was. Supply Division was always afraid that the local procurement would be for items which would not be of a quality meeting the higher standards of UNICEF; they were sometimes right, but not always.

Soft currencies

Charnow: What were the problems about the use of soft currencies or non-transferable currencies?

Gendron: That was more a financial problem than a purchase problem. That applies to the greatest extent to the East European countries and that varied a lot. I remember the days when UNICEF was going a very long way to get Zlotys, because there were some very good purchases to be made in Poland. Once when there was a triangular operation, whereby we had a contribution from Australia, which was non-convertible; with that contribution we bought wool on the spot. That wool was sold to Poland, and loaded on a Polish ship; we were paid in zlotys. Thus, everybody was happy. Australia sold surplus wool, Poland had no foreign currency to spend to have wool, and UNICEF has Zlotys.

Adaptation of supplies to local needs

Charnow: I have had the impression that there is a rather not sufficiently told story about UNICEF's contributions through the supply field by providing adaptations of Western technology for use on a wide and economical scale in developing countries, like

with cold chains, the enrichment of milk, pump development, ORS, perhaps in the use of syringes and so on. Can you think of instances along these lines?

Gendron: This is in fact one area where UNICEF has been extremely efficient, practically being a pioneer. To a great exten, this is due to the type of recruitment we had. Many of our programme officers were generalists, men of action, whom we recruited because they had a social feeling for the people of developing countries and had talents. They were recruited often on the spot, had the experience of living outside this Western world of ours and knew that it was a bit futile to try to go straight from the Stone Age to the twenty-first century. So they felt it was necessary to adapt the UNICEF assistance, based on Western technologies and products, to the development marked by the people whom we were assisting in the field.

You talked about food. Well, we know that there is nothing more difficult than to change the food habits of primitive or even not-so-primitive people. Simple people eat the same food all the time and are extremely suspicious of food different from theirs. We have seen that, even in emergencies when people were starving, they absolutely refused to eat something different from what they were used to. So UNICEF developed, for assistance, weaning foods, which were a great improvement for the nutrition of children and at the same time were a link between the traditional feeding habits of these simple people and the more sophisticated type of food available from the surpluses of donor countries.

Similarly, the development of pumps and water supply is very interesting. First, UNICEF started to supply modern hand-pumps but they would break. Even a hand-pump, how rugged it is, has to be handled in a gentle way. When you have people that never saw a pump before, they would break it anyway. Thus, we developed pumps much stronger than what was available commercially, and had them manufactured according to our specifications.

All of this is one of the great features of UNICEF in my opinion, and this is due to almost a total extent to people in the field who had the contact with the population and understood what their problems were and where their limitations were.

Charnow: Were these programme officers or the supply officers you are talking about?

Gendron: No, the programme officer. The programme officers were supposed to have a supply function at the same time with the programme officer deciding what was needed, and the supply officer was supposed to be the person looking at how to materialize the request of the programme officer.

Charnow: So you would get feedback from them of what was needed?

Gendron: Yes.

Charnow: Was it also due to some of the people in the Supply Division, people like Lou Shapiro, Jack Richman, some of the people who had been around for a long time?

Gendron: Yes. Very often there had been products being brought in or purchased by Supply Division without enough guidance from field and which proved to be the wrong products. The fault again was not with the Supply Divison; the fault was with the field because the field was not able to define the need with enough accuracy.

Reimbursable procurement

Charnow: What about the question of reimbursable procurement?

Gendron: It was a very good thing. It had two advantages. The advantage for the country, there are more than two, but from purely the material angle, the advantage for the country was that we could purchase at a cheaper price than they themselves could purchase. The advantage for us was that we could also purchase at a cheaper price than we would have done without this extra reimbursable procurement because the quantities we would purchase of a specific product were larger, therefore the price would be better. There was also one more possible result in this reimbursable procurement. It is that even if we would purchase exactly what the government decided what they wanted to purchase, it gave us a way of influencing the government in purchasing the right thing in the sense which we would refuse to purchase things which we would not basically approve of. So it was a way of a kind of service, or advice which we would give the governments through this reimbursable procurement. I think it was good.

Charnow: You mean they would ask you to get something and you would say, we think it's too expensive or too fancy?

Gendron: I am sure at the field level there was at first this intervention, meaning that if the government wanted us to buy Rolls Royces, somebody would tell them why don't you buy some other make. Then it would be at Headquarters where we had absolutely the liberty to accept or refuse local procurement or tone it down. In some cases we would not take it on, leaving the responsbility to the Government to purchase through whoever they wanted.

Relations Supply Division with Comptroller and Programme Division

Charnow: What about the closeness of contact and coordination between the Supply Division, the Programme Division, and the Comptroller?

Gendron: Between the Comptroller and Supply Division, it was an intimate relationship because when you buy something it has to be paid for. So there was never a problem. The contact with the Programme Division was not as good as that. There was always some effort to improve the relationship between the two. That started when the Supply Division started, I don't remember the name of the document which I believe is still being used, which is the document which is the procurement list and comes from the field and has to be vouched by the Programme Desk before it reaches Supply Division and is procured. Not the BAL, what what comes from the BAL itself. Anyway, there always has been the liaison but never as intimate a thing as it should have been. The Programme Desk people were people with good field experience, which most of the time is the case but not always has been the case.

JPO's

Charnow: Would you like to say something about the experience with JPOs when you were heading Administration?

Gendron: JPOs were not used in very great numbers at the time when I was with Administration, but still we had a few and they proved very good because first they were people really dedicated to the work. They were young people with necessary background to make good programme people and they had also the great advantage of being free of cost to us, which permitted us to have more staff in areas where our budget was a bit restricted. Usually, if my memory is correct, these JPOs were available at large for services - this has happened only lately. But JPOs were usually offered by one country to go to specific areas or another country. It worked quite well. We were asking for JPOs for specific tasks. I think it is that a number of the former JPOs are now UNICEF staff members after the good experience we had with them. We had one or two who didn't work properly, which is normal with any type of recruitment. Most of them were extremely fine people who became very useful when they remained with us.

National Professionals

Charnow: We talked earlier about the values of national professional personnel. However, are there also problems because of their expectations of salaries and perks and so on from them since they feel they are doing as good a job as the international professionals?

Gendron: No, I do not remember having any issues in that sense from national officers in the field. However, there was a problem with them, that was those national officers existing in Paris who disappeared when we moved to Geneva, and the national officers in Copenhagen. National officers in Copenhagen were, in my opinion, a handy thing to have to start with, but they proved to be a real nuisance. I am not talking of individuals but the category because of the system which we had, in which we applied to the national officer the same upgrading and pay raise system as for the general service category. It came very quickly that people in Copenhagen became grossly overpaid as national officers. Now, at long last, you don't have national officers in Copenhagen. The reason why national officers remained in Copenhagen so long was that there was a certain fear that if these national officers would become international professional in Copenhagen, that would have a similar effect in other areas, such as India, where we have a large number of national officers and which we didn't want to do. In my opinion, such long hesitation was unwarranted because even if New York was considering Copenhagen as a field post, it actually was just a branch of Headquarters.

"Lean" organization

Charnow: Over the years UNICEF has had a reputation in the UN family as being a lean organization in terms of staffing and personnel. That was good for fund-raising purposes and our general image. What is your feeling about that particular issue and your experience with that?

Gendron: At the time when I was still with UNICEF as Director of Administration we were certainly very lean. We were practically working on a shoestring. But it worked. There is no doubt, it worked. It is very nice to have more people but I am not totally convinced that the efficiency is better for that. Certainly with more people, you need more people to deal with more people. I don't have any opinion as to the reasons why my successors enlarged the size of UNICEF. When I was in, I did to a certain extent, but possibly I was a bit stingy in that respect. But I think we were working quite well with a lesser number of professionals and general service. I was all for getting more people in the field but I am not sure that it was so necessary at Headquarters.

Emergencies

Charnow: Would you say something about UNICEF's work in emergencies and its reputation for being very efficient in delivering supplies?

Gendron: In that respect I think that the reputation is extremely true. UNICEF has two considerable advantages over other UN agencies with regard to emergencies.

One is that we have many field offices and that these field offices are staffed not by people who are advisers, but doers to a very great extent. We have many local staff including these famous national officers who were professional, but who belonged to the culture or the country where the emergency takes. That is one extremely important factor in dealing with emergencies.

The second factor is Copenhagen, where we have a valuable large stock of the simple tools which are always required in case of emergency: cooking utensils, spades, tents and these things which we had for our regular programmes but which can be used and rushed to an emergency spot as needed. I think these are two of the great assets that UNICEF has. The first one is probably more important than the the other, especially the fact that we have local professional staff often available on the spot or next to the spot where the emergency takes place.

Views on personnel management trends

Charnow: Looking on the basis of your experience, what would you say are the general trends or tendencies in UNICEF that we ought to preserve and enhance and what are the ones that we should guard ourselves against?

Gendron: This is a difficult question you are asking because you almost ask me to bear a judgement of one part of UNICEF, the new UNICEF, of which I know little. However, let me revert to the part I know better and also to the studies which have been made on the personnel management of UNICEF over the last few years, which I have read with very great interest, especially the Bertrand report. I would say that I personally disagree to a very great extent with part of the philosophy of that report which was attacking or criticizing UNICEF for the so-called lack of academic qualifications of many of its members.

I think that one of the great qualities of UNICEF was not due to the fact that many of its members had no academic qualifications but because many of its members had an experience, an on-the-spot training, which is much more valuable than any academic qualification. You can always bring some experts to give some very sophisticated guidance to the doers, but what you need mostly in the work of UNICEF is to have people who know how to handle things and people the right way, and who know how to solve problems.

There is also one thing that alarms me a little bit is precisely what we talked about earlier, the enlargement of the size of UNICEF, the multitude of new staff. There has been an enormous influx of recruitment from outside over the last few years and this has disrupted this family link which existed between the staff of UNICEF.

If I may recall a little bit of my own history, I remember when I was recruited by Harry Labouisse in 1967 and I came to UNICEF, I was one of the three people, if I remember correctly, who Harry brought to UNICEF from UNRRA. I can still still remember how you, Jack, watched me over the table at meetings to size me up and to determine whether I was a spy being introduced into the organization. Several years later, one day you patted me on the back and told me I was not as bad as I looked at first.

So even during that period we certainly had many more people going up to the top level from inside than new recruits from outside. There were recruits from outside but not as many as to disrupt the spirit of UNICEF. So I am a bit worried to see so many new people and in such a large quantity. There is always the danger that little shops will build here and there and that this family aspect of UNICEF, which was one of its main features and one of the great reasons why other agencies were jealous of us, is now being disrupted.

Charnow: Well, you have given a lot of perspectives and points of view which will be invaluable for the record and for us as we pursue getting the memoirs and ideas of your various colleagues who worked at these issues at other, different, stages. I want to thank you very much for your patience and for adding to your very good interview with Reinhard Freiberg.

Gendron: You are very welcome.

Blank Page