

CHAPTER 11

Building a Global Learning Network: The International Council for Adult Education

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"All excellent things are as difficult as they are rare."

—Spinoza

"Thinking must be high, but action must be down to earth."

—Narayar Desai

This chapter on the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) is a modest contribution to broader sharing of a quite remarkable story of sustained international cooperation in the field of adult education.¹ The International Council for Adult Education is the major international nongovernmental organization in the field of adult education. With members in well over one hundred nations; major regional bodies in Europe, Africa, Asia and the South Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, North America and the Arabic speaking states; programs in critical areas of global importance; a respected journal, *Convergence*; a tradition of holding World Assemblies each four to five years; the ICAE is a vital network for adult educators and others concerned with learning in community and global contexts.

The structures of the ICAE have made it possible for people in many parts of the world to use adult education for democratic purposes through smaller and larger activities. The entire story of the Council and its past and present impact would take many books. These notes by one

of the people who worked in the Secretariat of the ICAE from 1975 to 1991 are a mostly anecdotal start.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It began in a discussion in a room in the Tokyo Prince Hotel in Japan on the evening of July 27, 1972.² Present were J. Roby Kidd and Gordon Selman of Canada; Arthur Stock of England; John Cairns and Paul Bertelsen of UNESCO headquarters; Mary Grief and Alex Charters of the United States; Paul Chu of the International Labour Organization; John Lowe of Scotland; Helmuth Dolff of Germany; Paul Mhaiki of Tanzania; and about twenty others who were participants at the UNESCO Third International Conference on Adult Education. Roby Kidd had just finished a year traveling around the world, with funds from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada, writing a report on new innovations in learning. But as usual with Kidd, he was doing several other things at the same time. He was taking the message to as many countries as possible that the UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education was important and that a new international organization for adult educators was in the planning stages.

A smaller group, including Selman of Canada, Chu of the ILO, Bertelsen of UNESCO, Dolff of Germany, Charters of the United States, and Lowe of Scotland had met the night of July 25, after the first formal day of the International UNESCO Conference. This advisory group took on responsibilities for inviting key adult educators from each of the regions who were present at the Tokyo conference to a special meeting, assigning particular preparatory responsibilities to each. The members of this group shared the view that just as the cooperative movement, the libraries, trade unions, and teachers all had international nongovernmental bodies, it was time for the adult education movement to do so as well. As indicated, in that hotel room discussion on the evening of the 27th, a substantial number of adult educators with good geographic representation were assembled. Kidd shared his thoughts on the possibilities of an international association.

While there was support for the idea from each of the regions represented, a number of questions and criticisms were put forward. Would the new association detract from the workings of UNESCO? Bertelsen and Cairns of UNESCO assured the group that would not be the case. If we were truly into an age of "life-long" learning, was it appropriate to

create a "sectoral" association for adult educators? And, if this were to be an association of individuals, would it not weaken the existing national and regional associations by drawing membership away from them? At the end of the evening, once the delegates had left, the smaller core group met again to take a "reading" of the meeting, and decided that the ICAE would be a confederation of national and regional adult education associations, not of individuals, so as not to draw resources from national associations. Because of new commitments to life-long learning, special support for adult education was needed. Therefore, UNESCO officers working within the Adult Education Division favored the new organization.

In light of the substantial support which had been exhibited, the decision was made to go forward with the idea. Those national associations which were interested in joining could do so, and it was hoped that those not ready would come in at a later time.

Some months later, people around the world were informed by Kidd of the existence of the ICAE and an invitation to cooperate was extended. Malcolm Adeshiah of India, former deputy director-general of UNESCO, became the first president; J. Roby Kidd of Canada was the secretary-general; and vice presidents included Paul Lengrend of France, Paul Mhaiki of Tanzania, and Majid Rahnema of Iran. Helmuth Dolff of Germany was the first treasurer.

The Council, which was legally registered in Canada on February 14, 1973, was the second effort at creating a world body of adult education in the twentieth century. The first was by Albert Mansbridge, who was the person most associated with the founding of the Workers' Education Association of Great Britain in the early 1900s. Mansbridge did a lot of work, primarily in the former British colonies—particularly in Canada and Australia—spreading the idea of education associations for the purpose of providing quality education to workers in industrialized countries equal to that received by the dominant, elite classes. He and Morse Cartwright of the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A. took on the responsibility for organizing the first world meeting of adult educators in 1929 in Oxford, England.

The World Association for Adult Education brought together a remarkable number of people from many different countries—most of the "world." The world of the 1920s did not extend much beyond North America, Europe, Australia, and to some extent Japan. It did not recognize most of Africa, Latin America, the Arabic-speaking countries, or the Caribbean. But the World Association did bring together the strong Nor-

dic tradition, the French early work in popular education, and the British conceptions in one place for the first time. There were delegates from Japan and China, as well as other important colonial links such as India, Canada, and New Zealand. (It is worth noting that the very words "adult education" do not have a direct translation in either French or the Nordic languages. The very formulation of the concept itself betrays certain cultural-linguistic biases.)

The World Association continued until the beginning of the Second World War, when all of the international and global associations were fragmented as a consequence of that conflict. It was not revived in the postwar period, although the legal structures of the World Association were held by Edward Hutchinson, the postwar secretary of the National Institute for Adult Education for England and Wales.

The postwar wave of international organizing in adult education was stimulated by the birth of UNESCO. Founded in the immediate aftermath of the war as the scientific, cultural, and educational structure of the United Nations, UNESCO placed importance on the role of adult education in the building of a new world with respect for human rights and as a means of strengthening the possibilities of permanent peace. The first UNESCO international conference on adult education took place in 1949, in Elsinore, Denmark. It brought together about two hundred delegates from forty-five countries, including Ned Corbett, who was the executive director of the Canadian Adult Education Association.

Ned Corbett was a dedicated internationalist and was convinced that adult education was an important contributor to world reforms. At about that time, Corbett had just taken on a new assistant director, a young man, J. Roby Kidd, who was fresh out of Columbia Teachers College in New York with a doctorate in adult education, who brought with him much experience from working with the YMCA and other organizations. He began his career in a field that was defining itself as international in an era of profound hope and global reform. As a result, when Kidd later took over the directorship of the Canadian Association, he already had a strong commitment to international, as well as Canadian linkages. His previous work with UNESCO resulted in Canada hosting the second UNESCO international conference on adult education at the campus of the University of Montreal in 1960.

Kidd and Alexander Charters, of Syracuse University in the United States, were already working towards getting some kind of nongovernmental linkages started. Meetings of university adult educators coming together in Montreal resulted in the creation of the International Con-

gress for University Adult Education (ICUAE). This body is still very much alive, with a permanent secretariat in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Its main activity in the 1990s is the publication of a journal on university adult education.

Thus, by 1972 many personal networks and early patterns of international exchange and cooperation were well established. Kidd in the meantime had moved from the Canadian Association for Adult Education to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, as first chair of the Adult Education Department in the new Graduate Faculty of Education. When plans were announced for the third UNESCO International Conference, Kidd began to weave the various contacts and friendships together more deliberately.

INITIAL SUPPORT

The initial support came from Canada, the United States, Britain, and the countries of the Commonwealth. India, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria, Jamaica, Venezuela, and a number of other developing countries, were members from the beginning. France, Germany, and Ireland were also early European members. It was the combination of contacts in the national adult education associations with those in university adult education that provided the strongest base for the early development of the Council.

EARLY UNESCO SUPPORT

The choice of Dr. Malcolm Adeseshiah as the first president was an important appointment. India had a strong tradition in adult education. In addition, his recent past with UNESCO was a reassurance to others of its centrality in the mission of the Council. Adeseshiah was an active economist, who wrote and contributed to international development policy debates. UNESCO and the members of the staff at headquarters in Paris, who followed adult education matters, were most supportive of any efforts which were directed at strengthening the links among adult educators. They saw clearly the benefits of an organization which worked outside of government circles to stimulate discussions and even to put pressure on governments themselves to be more generous in national budgets to adult education programing.

THE TIME WAS RIPE

One of the things that made it possible to start the ICAE in the early 1970s was the new independence in the previous decade of so many developing countries. There was suddenly a much larger world of adult education interests, with more countries working in the international arena, and, importantly, there were new sources of funds for international cooperation. The birth of the bilateral aid agencies, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Canadian Agency for International Development (CIDA), and similar bodies in many of the richer nations, meant broader possibilities for supporting the adult education work in many of the developing countries.

There was also funding and new political power. With newer countries represented in U.N. organizations, there needed to be programs corresponding to their needs. So the times provided for a much larger constituency than had previously existed; a constituency with both a political and economic underpinning to it. But the times also brought with them new kinds of global sensibilities.

The rather sudden appearance of so many new nations brought a sensibility and a visibility to differences in standards of living in parts of the world of which many people in the world were unaware. The times also carried with them a renewed and broader sense of internationalism, the idea that together all could help make a better world and it could only happen if the entire world were involved, not just the European countries, not just the rich countries. Also there developed the sense of obligations in the rich countries to support training, education, and infrastructure development in countries which were less rich.

EARLY MANDATE

The mandate was to strengthen linkages among adult educators working in various countries. In the report to the second meeting of the board of the ICAE, which met in Cologne, Federal Republic of Germany May 13 and 14, 1974, the organization was described as, "a co-operative enterprise in development—a means of sharing ideas, resources and experience in the development of adult education and particularly a way of utilizing adult education more effectively in many of the developing countries" (ICAE, 1974). In addition, the early mandate included the exploration of the relationship of adult education to the major social issues

of the day—peace, development, democracy, food. It was expected to provide an additional voice to, and work in tandem with, UNESCO and other United Nations agencies with like interests.

THE CHOICE OF CANADA FOR THE HEADQUARTERS

Canada was chosen as the first headquarters because Roby Kidd lived there. It was as simple as that. Kidd was the spark plug, the organizer who was able to "pull off" the Council. It is doubtful that Kidd asked anyone in the first few years if they were happy with Canada. No one else was really very interested in putting in the energy that it took to get things rolling. The fact, however, that Kidd was a Canadian may have been one of the reasons why he was able to work as effectively as he did. If Kidd had been from the United States or the Soviet Union, for example, given the international climate of the 1970s, it is unlikely that support would have been so forthcoming. Canada had a good international reputation, for its support of the United Nations, development in general, and for issues around human rights. It was an acceptable country and Kidd was rendered more "acceptable" by being a Canadian. Most importantly, Kidd was prepared to find the funding for the Council.

TANZANIAN CONNECTION

My own first connections with the ICAE came about because of my position at the Institute of Adult Education at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania from 1970 to 1974. I had been in close contact with Paul Bertelsen, the head of adult education at UNESCO prior to the 1972 UNESCO conference. He had worked in Tanzania for a number of years before taking up his position with UNESCO in Paris. Because of his urging, I agreed to do the research for a major paper on Tanzania's adult education program for the Tokyo UNESCO Conference. I wrote the paper with Paul Mhaiki, the director of the Institute of Adult Education. On the strength of this paper, Paul Mhaiki was able to convince the Ministry of Education that Tanzania should be represented in Tokyo. Once in Tokyo, the Tanzanian efforts were highlighted by the conference. Paul Mhaiki met Kidd and the others and was offered the vice presidency of the Council for Africa. Upon returning from Tokyo,

Mhaiki held a meeting to resurrect the dormant Tanzanian Adult Education Association. Later, when I was ready to leave Tanzania, Mhaiki recommended me to Kidd as someone who could help him get the Council going.

FIRST FUNDS

The early work of the Council was supported by students from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) and other volunteers in Toronto. Kidd was very creative in making the most of modest funds. For example, the first office space was at the downtown Kensington Market Campus of George Brown Community College, arranged by Doug Light who was the president of the College and a former student of Kidd's at OISE. Canadian government funds for training were among the first grants to the Council. I was still working in Tanzania when we received an unsolicited grant from Kidd for work in our Institute there.

I joined the Council as the research officer in August 1975, after one year as a senior fellow at the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex, England. When I was hired, the Council's budget was about twenty-five thousand dollars a year, with my salary accounting for fifteen thousand. Shortly afterwards, the Council was successful in getting a number of project grants, including a substantial one from CIDA, to begin exploratory work in Latin America. Paz and Knute Buttedahl of the ICAE staff traveled throughout 1975-76 in Latin America, seeking the best ways to support and link up adult educators there.

By 1975-76, through volunteer and part-time support, the ICAE had a strong team in the Secretariat. In addition to Kidd, the Buttedahls and Hall, there were Jackie Sullivan, Audrey Herrema and Margaret Gayfer of Toronto, Abdelwahid Yousif of the Sudan (an OISE student), Nsang O'Khan Kabwasa of Zaire (OISE student) and Rebecca Kabwasa of the United States (working on the Dar es Salaam conference). Kidd carried out his duties as secretary general as a volunteer, in addition to his job as a professor in the Department of Adult Education at OISE.

The most substantial early funds received were for the organization of the 1976 conference on Adult Education and Development in Tanzania. Approximately \$300,000 were found for preparations, travel, translations, reporting, accommodations, and follow-up, from a broad cross section of foundations and agencies. ICAE also began to receive funds for the early work in participatory research in 1976, but it was not until

1977 that it received the first substantial grant for central organizing activities of the organization: a five-year grant of \$750,000 from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

EARLY PARADIGMS

From the very first days of the ICAE, it drew from a broad set of ideas about the role of adult education in society. The strongest early influences included the rich social activist traditions of Canada, the British Fabian socialist association with adult education, the liberal and humanistic adult education perspectives in the United States, the British extramural tradition, which had been exported to most of the colonies, the Gandhian tradition of India, and the folk high school traditions of both Germany and the Nordic countries. Adult education was seen by most to be a strong responsibility of the state. Indeed, in those days, there were as many governmental officials in adult education present in Council events as there were persons from the voluntary sector, what we now call the nongovernmental sector. The education of adults was seen as a necessary supplement to the creation of fully democratic societies and as an important contributing factor in the "development" of poorer nations. The adult education community itself, whether governmental, nongovernmental, university or community-based, was seen to be a large and reasonably coherent whole.

The earliest days of the Council in the 1970s brought together persons from the social reform traditions, those who thought it important to professionalize the field through university training, and those who saw it as a component of the newer paradigms of international development. To some degree, these same tendencies are still represented in the framework of the ICAE. The underlying ideology of the Council has been one of people from different parts of the world working together to strengthen the structures of adult education and the role of adult education in the face of critical global issues. What the Council did, even in the early days, was to create a much broader definition of adult education, to expand the meaning of adult education, to demonstrate how that notion of adult education was critical to achieving any number of aims in different countries. The ICAE has reflected the shifts in emphasis over time, namely, international cooperation in adult education (1972-76), adult education and development (1976-1982), adult education and so-

cial movements (1982–1990), and adult education and democracy (1990–present) (ICAE, 1991).

EARLY WAYS OF WORKING

During the first few years, the ICAE corresponded with and worked primarily through the twenty to thirty national associations. It was not very difficult to maintain contact, as there were few associations and the key people knew each other fairly well. In fact, at the time, the ICAE was mostly an information network, with some modest projects which for the most part served to support the building of the Secretariat's capacity to communicate with the membership. The adult education associations which joined the Council agreed to correspond with the Council about events and ideas from their countries and to share international information with their national members. Up until 1979, the Council operated from year to year with meetings of a "Board," which consisted of one representative from every association. Only later would a strong programmatic base come into being.

The Council was intent on gaining visibility for the role of adult education in a changing world vis-a-vis the United Nations, and in a wide variety of circles. It was establishing what is called in Spanish its "poder convocatoria," which is the notion of "If you call, somebody will come."

THE 1976 WORLD ASSEMBLY IN DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

Because of the necessary economies of space, time, and funding, all the international assemblies are invitational. The First World Assembly of Adult Education and Development in 1976 marked the transition in Council history from "international cooperation in adult education" to "adult education and development" and put the Council on the map, so to speak. First of all, it demonstrated the ICAE's capacity to organize an international conference. Secondly, it demonstrated that important figures in adult education and development would participate, persons such as Lucile Mair of Jamaica, Paulo Freire of Brazil, and Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's president. Thirdly, it put the ICAE at the heart of the discourse linking adult education and development. It was an exciting, passionate, and stimulating conference. It set the agenda for much of the

international movement for years to come (Hall and Kidd, 1979). It gave the Council a way of working and set parameters and frameworks which it was able to use in many different ways.

For example, the first international support for participatory research, a community-based approach, came together in Dar es Salaam. Paulo Freire met with a group of younger adult educators in discussions of their work. President Julius Nyerere brought his sense of the South, the strength of the South, and what poorer countries could do for themselves. He shared his vision of the centrality of adult education to government policy, and his commitment to international cooperation in adult education.

Lucile Mair, the Jamaican historian, had just completed her breakthrough study on the history of women in the Caribbean. Her keynote address was a clarion call for adult education to reexamine the role of women in its theory and practice. The *Design for Action*, which came out of the conference, pulled together the implications of scores of ideas and commitments made by those assembled (*Ibid.*).

THE ROLE OF THE REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Dar es Salaam also marked the beginning of a special role for the regional organizations of the ICAE. Three major regional adult education bodies existed prior to the formation of the ICAE: the European Bureau for Adult Education (founded in 1953), the African Adult Education Association (1969), and the Asian and South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (1964). In Dar es Salaam, the Council made, at least informally, a commitment to strengthen and work with the regional bodies which already existed, and to support the creation and development of such organizations for other regions. The Asian group, for example, held its first reorganization meeting in many years in Africa at that conference!

The structures of the Council now came to include national associations, cooperating NGOs from other fields, the secretariat itself, and, with a role that would grow in subsequent years, the regional organizations. The model of a council of autonomous and independent institutional members, each with its own financing and its own board, was reinforced. The ICAE is not a development organization; it is a federation of independent, nongovernmental adult education organizations. In the 1979 Helsinki constitution, which is still in place, the regional organiza-

tions nominate the vice-presidents of the Executive Committee (a thirty-two member governing body), and the national associations nominate thirteen or so other members. This provides for a sharing of power.

THE CHOICE OF JULIUS NYERERE AS FIRST HONORARY PRESIDENT

Julius Nyerere, as first honorary president, brought enormous prestige to the Council. One of the most respected world leaders, he believed in, and understood, adult education probably more than any other head of state. Early visibility and credibility for the ICAE was in part drawn from the association with such well known figures of the day. Many of the early vice-presidents were chosen because of their reputations and credibility. Eventually the Council itself, through its mandate and programs, began to have its own credibility, so that it lends institutional recognition of its own to those who serve as officers. In the earlier days it was a small, struggling organization that, quite frankly, did not receive much attention. There were no turf wars as there was no turf! It was quite a relaxed, informal thing. As it has grown and become a much more important body, in terms of politics and policy, it begins to reproduce the tensions and conflicts that are found in a larger society.

THE HELSINKI MEETINGS

In June 1979, meeting for the last time under the founding constitution, the Board put a new one in place in Helsinki. While not on the scale of the world assemblies, the Helsinki meeting was critical, as it marked the first meeting to take place in one of the Nordic countries, nations which have had a long commitment to adult education and social movements.

Helsinki was also the transition year in leadership between J. Roby Kidd and myself. On the basis of my experience as the secretary of the Dar es Salaam World Assembly, my part in the establishment of an international research network, and my success in raising some funds, the Board appointed me as secretary-general, and Chris Duke, formerly of Australia, as associate secretary-general. Duke stayed in this position, taking major responsibility for Asian regional matters, organizing the first major world meeting in China in 1983, supervising a study on adult

education and poverty in 1980, and providing welcome organizational support to the Council until 1985 and the Third World Assembly in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Dr. J. Roby Kidd stayed on as treasurer of the Council until his death at sixty-five years in March 1982. The J. Roby Kidd Award commemorates his life and is given each year in recognition of new adult educators from across the world who show particular promise.

THE BEGINNING OF "NETWORKING" IN THE COUNCIL

The Council's experience in building a research "network" in the years 1976-79 served as a model for the development of a great many other such activist and grass roots networks in the future. We had discovered the concept and structure of networking in the late 1970s and found it an enormously valuable organizational tool for spreading new ideas quickly, building notions of "horizontality," and working quickly in nonbureaucratic ways. We applied the notion of networking to the development of other programmatic areas.

Yusuf Kassam, formerly director of the Institute of Adult Education in Tanzania, and former coordinator of the African Participatory Research Network, joined the Secretariat in Toronto in April 1981 as the new director of programmes. His experience in the field, and solid reputation in the international community, were to prove critical to the expansion of the role of programing in the Council throughout the next decade. The Council's second network was developed in the area of adult education and peace.

Helena Kekkonen from Finland came to ICAE with the idea of an adult education and peace network similar to the participatory research networks. From that the Council developed the notion of decentralized programming, which is still a key characteristic of ICAE programs. Decentralized programming means that all initiatives do not originate in the headquarters; instead, international focal points for the networks can be found in various parts of the world. The peace network was coordinated from Helsinki, the participatory research network from New Delhi, and so forth. Two additional networks were in place by 1980, in primary health care and adult education and the beginning of the women's program.

Margaret Gayfer, the editor of *Convergence*, undertook a research study on women and adult education, which later developed into a

women's network (Gayfer and Bernard, 1983). This research project raised many new areas for adult educators and, because the project itself was a participatory one, the actual work of the project laid the ground work for an extensive network which continues to be one of the most important areas of the Council's program. It underscored the underrepresentation of women in adult education research, writing, and programming and stimulated the Council to begin to think of the representation of women in the very structures of the Council itself.

ADULT EDUCATION AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

With the strong organizational support of the Council's French member, *Peuple et Culture*, and the personal involvement of its secretary general, Bernard Smagghe, France was chosen for the Second World Assembly. It was held near Paris in October 1982, at a residential adult education center in the village of Marly-le-Roi. The Council wanted to strengthen its francophone base and was keen on making links with Francois Mitterand, the newly-elected president of France, who, it was known, had a commitment to both "education populaire," and to internationalism. He was the keynote speaker at the opening, which took place in the new plenary hall of UNESCO in Paris.

Strategically, the Paris Assembly represented the first time that the old and the new networks of the Council came together. Although the official title of the Paris conference was "Adult Education and Authentic Development," it was already clear that the notion of development was unable to capture what most of the practitioners and activists were experiencing. What became clear, initially by thinking through critical social issues around which networks or programs might be developed, was that there was much to be gained by linking adult education to the work of various social movements. It was argued that adult education had its origins in Europe within the various social movements and reforms which followed the industrial revolution. By the early 1980s the women's movement, the peace movement, trade union movements, solidarity movements of the North with the South, movements of indigenous people, and other movements were gaining momentum. Beginning in 1982 in Paris and continuing until 1990, the Executive and the Secretariat of the Council, among many other activities, worked to strengthen the links between the adult education movement and other movements.

Importantly, Dame Nita Barrow of Barbados was elected president

of the ICAE in 1982. Dame Nita had an extensive career in nursing, primary health care, the women's movement, Christian world solidarity, as well as deep links with people in every part of the United Nations. Her leadership from 1982 to 1990 coincided with arguably one of the most productive periods of international adult education collaboration and expansion. Edmund Gleazer Jr. of the United States, with a long career of strengthening community colleges in that country, was elected as treasurer.

Social movements were identified as primary means of transformation. For adult educators, this meant trying to understand the agendas of the peace movement, the women's movement, North-South solidarity, the worker's movement, and others, as well as trying to demonstrate the potential of their field in the service of these movements.

The 1982-90 period broadened the membership considerably, adding to the earlier base of university faculty members and professional adult educators to include many more from the growing number of non-governmental organizations.

The 1982-90 period also reflected the more open understanding of the politics of adult education. The notion of the neutrality of the field was for the most part put aside and in its place was an understanding that it is socially constructed in the same way that the world is constructed and that one is constantly facing a set of choices about how to work and what to do. The Council, in the spirit of Paulo Freire, and similar to church workers in the theology of liberation, made a preferential option for the poor.

TENSIONS OR COMPETING POINTS OF VIEW

There has always been competition between various points of view. When community-based or activist adult educators first came into Council circles, there was some criticism of those who were engaged in professional or institutionalized forms of adult education. Over the years, however, those tensions lessened, in part because of the much greater participation of nongovernmentally-based educators and a decrease in the participation of government adult education departments and university structures. By the mid 1990s, the Council was by and large taken up by the NGO voice.

There was an anticipation of tension in 1982, the first time we brought together all the previous Council members from the associations

and the universities with all of these new network people, social movement people, and activists. We thought there might be much friction, but, in fact, people were quite happy. The ones who had been there for a time were delighted to see so many new faces and energies. The younger folk were pleased to find so much support from the "old timers." The halls of Marly-le-Roi rang with song and dance, as well as demonstrations and evidence of deep differences. The spirit of the 1982 event was perhaps best captured by the plenary report from the women's caucus, animated by Lynda Yanz. In the place of a narrative report by one speaker at the microphone, the plenary hall resounded to the music and words of a song which was collectively written with the help of Arlene Mantle, an activist singer and song writer from Canada. The words raised critical questions about the official opening deliberations several days earlier, noting in lyrics, "They said 'man' and 'he', but where were 'we', women who hold up half the sky?"

THE POLITICS OF GENDER

An important issue with which the Council has struggled has been the changing role of women. As with most social action organizations, the 1980s have raised important challenges to patriarchal patterns deeply embedded in the structures of the Council and its memberships. The politics of gender within an international organization such as the Council is decidedly complex, because the various elements of the organization do not work with each other on a day-to-day basis, and because of the differences in gender politics in the various cultures of the world.

The Participatory Research Network, the Adult Education and Peace Network, and the Women's Programme in the Council all shared a common notion that they were more than informational programs. They saw themselves as "transformative" in nature and concerned not only with sharing ideas with those outside the organization but with certain constituencies within the Council itself. They took the Council seriously and wanted it to be a model, as far as possible, of democratic ways of working. The women's program encouraged women to take up leadership responsibilities in their own adult education organizations, but eventually those issues began to be raised about the other structures of the Council, the Executive Committee, the Secretariat itself, and the committees. Questions such as how many women there were on the Executive Committee, who the key decision makers were in the Council, and what was

the role of women within the Council. These have been important issues since they were informally raised as early as 1980, when Margaret Gayfer first undertook her research on women and adult education.

The idea of "feminism" had been raised earliest in North America and Europe, but the protection of patriarchal practices important in the "South" raised new questions. Debates about the primacy of a "South" vs. "North" ideological framework, stumbled over the issue of transformative adult education, where issues of balance and alliances are critical. How do we understand the relationships of issues of class, patriarchy, regional autonomy, decentralization, or community focus? The experience of oppression varies greatly, depending on one's race, class, physical ability, and so forth, and all of these issues can be found in the life of the ICAE. The giving of primacy to the issue of women's oppression over the issue of oppression of the South by the North, has been seen by some, mostly but not exclusively men, as splitting the ranks, thus weakening the organization of resistance and transformation in the South.

POPULAR EDUCATION MEETS THE WORLD: BUENOS AIRES, 1985

The Third World Assembly was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in December 1985, shortly after the country's return to democratic rule under President Alfonsín. The Assembly, orchestrated and designed by the then secretary-general of the Latin American Council for Adult Education (CEAAL), Francisco Vio Grossi, was the first world meeting in the field of adult education to be held in any part of Latin America and served to highlight the maturation and rapid dissemination of the concept of popular education. The Assembly brought together for a few days in one city the experiences of nearly six hundred educators from nearly one hundred countries. It combined them with a people who were excited by the realities of democracy after so many years of military rule. It made full and practical use of the extensive and articulate Latin American experiences of popular education to weave the group together. But for most, the deeper meaning of the week was symbolized by the Plaza de Mayo Mothers and Grandmothers, who had walked each day for years carrying photos of their missing children and husbands, eventually taking on the role of conscience of the nation and contributing to the downfall of the military. The World Assembly of Paris had linked adult

educators with broader social movements; Buenos Aires allowed adult educators to experience themselves as a movement.

THE LAUNCH OF INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR, 1990

The Fourth World Assembly of Adult Education was held in Bangkok, Thailand, January 8-18, 1990. The theme for the assembly was "Literacy, Popular Education and Democracy," and the event marked the launching of the United Nations International Year of Literacy (ILY). The Council, having proposed such a year at one of its meetings in 1982, went all out to provide the very best possible beginning. With the logistical support of the remarkable Thai Department of Nonformal Education and the planning mind of Rajesh Tandon of India, the Bangkok event marked the beginning of the ICAE's phase of "Adult Education and Democracy."

Building on the momentum of Buenos Aires, strengthened by the dramatic events in the former Soviet Union and by the deepened aspirations of the people of Africa for real democracy, the Council entered its next phase. It marked the end of the eight-year presidency of Dame Nita Barrow and the election of Francisco Vio Grossi of Chile, the architect of the Latin American Council for Adult Education, and founder of the Chilean popular education center, El Canelo de Nos.

EVALUATION OF COUNCIL WORK

There have been two major institutional evaluations. One in 1979-80, under the leadership of Alan Etherington, was a means of reviewing the work of the Kidd years and setting new agendas. The results were brought to the 1981 Executive Committee Meeting in Trinidad. Five years later, there was a second major evaluation, done this time by Ted Jackson, formerly of the participatory research group, who had set up an independent consulting firm in the early 1980s. In addition, the Council has encouraged its component programs to be self-reflective.

In 1985, the Council created a structure to strengthen its reflection and evaluation capacity. The Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) has historically been composed of a combination of some of the most creative and effective program leaders and some of the regional leadership. Every year, each of the programs would do a self-assessment of its accomplishments and determine plans for the next year. The Programme

Advisory Committee would go over all of that material and make practical recommendations.

COUNCIL CREATOR OR REFLECTOR OF TRENDS?

It is sometimes said that leadership is the art of finding out where people are going and helping them get there! Inevitably, the Council has been both a reflection of local or regional trends, as well as a means by which local or region educators make connections with broader trends and pick up new ideas. For example, Third World countries, particularly in Africa and India, which have a vast number of nonreaders just within their own borders, insisted that literacy should have a higher place on the world agenda. Their emphasis on literacy was directly related to the Council's recommending to UNESCO and the United Nations that there should be a Year for International Literacy. When this came about in 1990, the ICAE played a leadership role in the mobilizing of global public opinion, which in turn stimulated literally thousands of groups to take direct action on their own literacy programs.

The ICAE has undoubtedly been an instrument for influencing the field of adult education. However, it could not do that unless elements of those changes already existed in society. Participatory research was taken up with such enthusiasm because it struck a chord: it resonated with problems which many adult educators had with earlier more rigid notions of research. The fact that the Council gave visibility to ideas around participatory research made it possible for those ideas to move much more quickly. It created a trend which is still with us. The same is true for women's issues which went far beyond just "courses for women."

One of the priority programs of the Council has concerned peace and human rights, and this has helped validate this issue when, in fact, militarism seems to be yet too central. The Council can give visibility to such issues, but it does not have any power other than a strong voice in the international discourse of the movement.

New ideas and networks do not always work, however. The Council tried very hard to support a permanent international network in worker's education, but the international trade union bodies thought that the Council was not the appropriate vehicle for that network. Workers' own organizations were the vehicles for that. The ICAE met with a series of frustrations and political difficulties at the international trade union level and eventually was unable to find the economic support necessary to

make such a network more permanent. Eventually, it had to let go of that network. There was no economic support for an autonomous Worker's Education Network, because the international scene is dominated by the workers' own organizations, and that may well be for the best.

The Council has been able to intervene over the years to help individuals come to justice or even survive. Carlos Gaspar is a brilliant popular educator working with the people in rural areas of The Philippines. During the Marcos years, Gaspar was a leader in the use of popular theater techniques in building the democracy movement. A Roman Catholic brother who was imprisoned for his adult education work by the Marcos regime, Gaspar was named by the ICAE as the recipient of its J. Roby Kidd Award, while still in prison. The Council wrote to the government officials asking for permission to present the award to Gaspar in prison, and asked its members to write calling for his release. Gaspar was ultimately released several days prior to the large ceremony that was being organized for him in his home town.

THE ROLE OF CONVERGENCE

Convergence has been the major publication of the Council since the earliest days. One of the things that the Council learned early on is the power of information: getting things out and into the hands of people. *Convergence*, which recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, has played a quite remarkable role in documenting innovation, giving particular emphasis to important developments in countries which are not covered by the European/North American journals. Under the very able editorship of Karen Yarmol-Franko, it has become a network of its own, linking theory and practice, and is widely used in Europe and North America as a rich source of teaching material. Paulo Freire was first published, for example, in 1971. Early Tanzanian developments were reported, as well as many other firsts in adult education, such as the articles on popular education, participatory research, the feminist challenge to adult education, reports on the literacy crusade in Nicaragua, special issues on prison education, the environment, the struggle of indigenous people, and many more. Even today, in the age of electronic networks, if you can get materials into print and into the hands of people so that they can see and read, it gives a sense of reality. The informational connective role the Council has played is probably its most important contribution to this day.

THE ICAE AT THE EARTH SUMMIT

In June 1992, the United Nations organized the International Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The environment had been an issue for the ICAE since its own World Assembly in 1976, so the Executive and membership of the Council were committed to making as significant contribution as possible at the Earth Summit itself. The key role which the ICAE played was the articulation through a broad consultative process of the International Treaty on Education for Sustainable Societies. This treaty was the highlight and final product of a week long "Journey for Environmental Education," itself a year-long process animated by Moema Viezzer and Darlene Clover of the Council.

DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES

Any world-wide structure is difficult to finance. With changing conditions in the world, the decline of international aid, and increasing polarization leaving the poorest nations in even worse shape, the ICAE faces a serious challenge. Continuing to operate in a democratic manner with less money for necessary planning meetings means much more effort needs to go into making use of electronic conferences and networks. While the Council took an early lead in this field, in general, the adult educators do not use the electronic communications capacities nearly as much as more affluent NGOs, such as the international environmental NGOs.

As funds for international cooperation become more scarce, the choices of how best to support a diverse international movement become critical. Earlier innovations, such as the policies of decentralization of programs, were being called into question. Gleazer, ICAE Treasurer, has noted:

By 1993, prior to the Executive's meeting in Madrid, the problems as well as the advantages of a decentralized approach were becoming apparent. . . . As just one example, each had its own newsletter, conducted its conferences, disseminated information in various ways, sought funds for program support, and maintained its financial records. In offices with limited staff, the variety of expertise required was obviously limited for the span of activities conducted.³

Transitions in leadership in large and far-flung organizations are often more difficult than in smaller organizations. This is because relations of trust and knowledge of the personalities of others are often the basis for taking decisions or moving forward. When Hall stepped down in 1991, Kassam stepped down as well, leaving a new and quite unknown adult educator, Retta Alemahehu, the secretary-general designate of the Executive Committee, to move forward with a complex organizational agenda. Within a year, he found the challenges more than he had agreed to and moved on. That the Executive was able to find a solution and move through a second transition in such a short period is evidence of the commitment and creativity of both the Secretariat staff and the Executive members responsible.

STRENGTHS OF THE COUNCIL

One of the strengths of the Council is that it is genuinely an international organization where the decision-making process involves people from literally all over the world. Having studied a great many other international nongovernmental organizations in my years since leaving the Council, it is clear that the Council is one of the very few such international NGOs which has been able to create a structure where the decision making, and the issues taken up, are done in such a geographically democratic manner. A second strength is the sheer geographic scale of its network. It has a vast mailing list of thousands of names of key people in every country in the world. Third, within the field of adult education, it has been able to be a voice for the least powerful in our world, raising issues about prison reform, the struggles of the oppressed, the poor, those who do not read, indigenous peoples, peace and human rights, and working people. As the only worldwide body in the field of adult education, it is important that it be preserved and supported. It represents a unique source of thinking and talking about adult education in the world.

THE PATHS FORWARD

These are challenging times everywhere. The pressures of economic, political, and cultural globalization are transforming the nature of domestic and international work. In some cases, it is becoming impossible to distinguish between the two. In Canada, for example, the adult edu-

cation of women in the Maquiladora Free Enterprise zones on the Mexican-U.S. border is very much a domestic issue, under the terms of the North American Free Trade Agreement. So the very nature of an organization, such as the ICAE, is changing. In 1992, the first woman secretary-general, Ana Maria Quiroz, who possesses dual Chilean-Canadian citizenship, took over responsibilities for the Secretariat of the Council. Peter Basel, a veteran of international adult education collaboration in Hungary and the countries of the former Eastern European bloc, joined the Council as the programme director. The leadership of Francisco Vio Grossi as president and the experienced members of the Executive will move the Council through the next phases in its history.

The Council is also playing a leadership role in an alliance of community-based networks, organizing to challenge and support the 1995 UN Social Summit, and continues its involvement in a variety of other efforts.

As from the very beginning of our adult education movement, our future is linked to concepts of deepening democracy and broadened rights and transformed lives. Vio Grossi, ICAE president, put it this way:

Adult education for democracy ought to teach working and learning collectively, taking into account different contributions, diverse points of view, different abilities . . . it is about learning to contribute, to listen and discuss in order to describe the richness of 'the other,' to advance to a synthesis where differences remain visible even while searching for a broader sense of collectivity and community. It should draw from and return learnings of democracy to daily lives (Vio Grossi, 1993).

NOTES

1. With thanks to Dan Andreae, Darlene Clover, Francisco Vio Grossi, Margaret Gayfer, Gordon Selman, and Edmund Gleazer Jr.
2. I am grateful to Gordon Selman for his recollections of the first formal meeting to discuss the setting up of an international council.
3. From personal communication to the author, August 3, 1993.

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