



## **WFM President's Report**

**6 November 2008**

**Den Haag**

### ***From Fuzzy to Formidable—My comments as WFM President***

I was elected Vice President of WFM in India in 1998, although I was not present at that meeting. I continued in that post until the death of Sir Peter Ustinov, and have been Acting President since that time until November 2008, when my resignation takes effect. I have enjoyed these ten years immensely and wish to make a few comments and observations on the decade.

When I was elected, I was not at all sure what the objectives of WFM internationally were, nor the programs we espoused. I therefore decided to attend Executive Committee meetings so I could get some grasp of what was happening, and have done so for the ten year period. That was a fast way of finding out!

I had been associated with WFM-Canada, so I knew about the principles of federalism, but so much of the talk was clouded for me by those who urged me to be a world citizen, or who wanted me to learn Esperanto. Initially, the aims and objectives seemed highly philosophical and people talked about "the WFM perspective" without articulating exactly what that was, except for goals that seemed to me highly unrealistic and somewhat *fuzzy*. The programs were not focused.

The advent of Bill Pace in New York brought a sea change. Gradually we articulated focused goals and cut down on the myriad programs that were really "wish lists." We put the budget in better order, and having realized that core funding was always a struggle, asked the Executive Committee members to pay their own way to attend meetings if possible. A splendid professional staff was assembled and WFM work began in a variety of countries around the world. The Executive Committee met staff when our meetings were held in New York and we were always impressed by the enormous amount and quality of work the staff accomplished for WFM-IGP, which brought *focus* to our work.

It became obvious that Bill was highly respected by people at the United Nations and by others working on the same issues. He was able to pull some of these people into our meetings to inform and engage us at a higher level than heretofore. Stability and continuity of Executive Committee members led by Keith Best and Council members led by Jim Christie contributed to further development of the organization and a strategic plan.

Becoming the Secretariat of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court has enabled WFM to gain higher profile and respect from the global community, as well as stay afloat financially and programmatically through a myriad of grants and donations from foundations and partners. Revised websites and publications keep members informed and current.

A lot of work went into revising the statutes and bylaws to reflect current decisions and practices. Tighter and

more accountable governance structures have been put in place. Decisions were taken about the viability and therefore the credentials of Member organizations, and procedures were made more transparent and responsible. This was somewhat tied to our financial situation, as we realized we could not continue to fund whoever wanted to show up to a meeting. Core funding remains a concern, and it is hoped the newly elected Co-Presidents may be able to help us in that area.

In my view, WFM has moved from a group having fuzzy goals to being a formidable organization, punching far beyond its weight in the international arena. I wish it well as its important work continues.

Lois M. Wilson  
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