staff news
INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND
APRIL 1988

AUDITING THE FUND'S ENVIRONMENT

The villains are new. Old-style factories made little secret of their occupational hazards—the menacing heavy equipment and the poisonous chemicals. For a long time, though, office buildings seemed their innocuous antithesis; the most pressing danger appeared to be boredom induced by excessively antiseptic neatness. The apparent hygiene is disarming, and misleading. Environmental problems in the office can be far more subtle and insidious.

For the better part of this decade the Fund has used Liam Keane to troubleshoot for environmental health problems within the institution. Initially asked to investigate individual complaints, Liam Keane's role has broadened over the years to now include a wide-ranging annual environmental health audit of the Fund's building and leased space. Each year his firm, Enviro Dynamics, evaluates the Fund's building, as well as the processes and procedures staff follow in various aspects of the Fund's work.

***Liam Keane** brings a background in chemistry and public health to his consulting firm, Enviro Dynamics, but he also finds a sense of humor invaluable in his work.*

The audit can include a detailed check of the air supply system; measurement of noise levels; checks for radon, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, and lead in water; measurements of bacteria levels in the cafeteria; and safety procedures for the running of equipment and the disposal of chemicals throughout the Fund. What emerges from this is a composite picture of the overall health of the Fund's physical environment—the atmosphere and conditions in which the Fund's employees spend the better part of their working lives.

Liam Keane clearly enjoys his job. An expatriate Irishman and a research chemist by training, he left his lab to pursue another degree in public health. The combination of theoretical and practical training held him in good stead in the field of environmental health consulting. And after years of solitary lab research "with all these machines clicking around me and seeing nobody from one end of the week to the other," he says, he relishes the more human side of his new career. "I enjoy the constant contact with people," he notes, "it's the main reason I do the environmental health work."

"The preventive part of our work is much more important than the resolution of individual complaints," Liam Keane argues, "but it is something that takes place very far behind the scenes." The environmental health audit normally takes place over a period of four to five months. "There are day-to-day variations in conditions. The direction of the wind," he notes, "can have an impact, for example. Instead of taking single snapshots, we try to assemble a collage of the environmental health of the building." Enviro Dynamics is also very careful to vary the time of the audit each year, since they find that the type of problems may vary with the seasons.

Unquestionably, the most important item in the audit is the building's air supply. When the energy crisis in the early 1970s placed a premium on the conservation of fuel, construction methods changed. Windows no longer

***Jim Sharp** (left), an industrial hygienist with Enviro Dynamics, measures the noise levels in the Print Shop as Benjamin Trapani, a press operator, runs his equipment.*

opened, insulation increased, buildings became more airtight. It was several years before the attendant problems became apparent. More and more petroleum-based products were being used in offices and more and more of the gases emitted by plastic surfaces, laminated particle board, carpets, paint, and the like remained in the air in these closed buildings. "It's quite possible," Liam Keane observes, "to have an incredible soup generated in absolutely new buildings if the air supply system isn't properly designed. If you measure one of these buildings, you don't find any one compound that is particularly prevalent. If you add everything together, however, you can get incredibly high levels of pollutants. The Fund's system is well designed, but in new buildings with poorly designed systems you can see great absenteeism."

Liam Keane is emphatic: "A building's air supply system is its lifeblood. It is the single most important element in a building as far as the health of the people are concerned." Most of the complaints received, ironically, pertain to comfort issues—rooms too hot, too cold, too stuffy. The real culprits are often odorless and tasteless and completely undetectable without sophisticated equipment. Carbon monoxide, for instance, can seep into work areas from underground garages in poorly designed buildings. The Fund building has sealed off its garage levels completely.

Radon gas is similarly difficult to detect without fairly sophisticated equipment. While homes in Washington appear to have widespread problems, large office buildings in the area have generally proved less susceptible. Radon gas is a natural decay product of uranium. When it seeps into a residence's foundation and is retained in an airtight house, it can pose a serious health problem. The foundations of office buildings, which are much sturdier and are designed to support many stories, are far less likely to allow the gas to enter in the first place. The Fund was recently tested for radon; no measurable amount was found.

Besides being the most important element in the environmental health of a building, the air supply system is also its most complex. A number of questions must be asked about its design and maintenance: Is the system clean? Are the ducts contaminated? How is the humidification done? If moisture is added to the air, what chemicals are used to keep down the bacteria? Is the air balanced? Is there sufficient outside air?

"One of the most important things you look at is the amount of outside air per person," Liam Keane notes. "You can measure that by measuring the amount of carbon dioxide in the air." Outside air is always of substantially higher quality than the air inside a building. That fact might strain one's credulity during one of Washington's mid-August heat inversions, but outside air, assuming a building is not adjacent to a chemical plant, always contains a lower concentration of pollutants than the internal air being expelled. And Washington's air—indeed the air of most East Coast cities in the United States—is actually considered very good, particularly when compared to that of Denver, Salt Lake City, or Los Angeles, for example.

If newer buildings are critically dependent on sophisticated, well-designed, and well-maintained air supply systems to expel accumulated pollutants, they do tend to be less susceptible to the contaminated ducts that plague older buildings. Ducts in older buildings manage to accumulate "unbelievable garbage," Liam Keane says. "If a new, closed building has a very good air supply system that is run correctly, I would always choose that over an old building. God knows what's in the ducts in some old buildings."

Enviro Dynamics recently completed a thorough check of the ventilation system in the Fund building. It involved, recounted industrial hygienist Jim Sharp, crawling through ducts and hanging off the roof, but the findings proved a pleasant surprise: everything was operating according to design specifications. In terms of air supply systems, Liam Keane deems the Fund's system "particularly good. The Fund has a very good software program that keeps track of the air supply and demand." That doesn't mean, of course, that particular sections do not occasionally "go out of whack," as he calls it. The system itself may malfunction or someone may simply have taped over air conditioning vents, and in so doing, imbalanced the distribution of air in an area.

While the air supply system is the principal concern in an audit of the environmental health of a building, it is by no means the only element that is examined. Enviro Dynamics, for instance, has measured noise levels in the Print Shop, set up procedures for the handling and disposal of chemicals for the Photo Lab, made recommendations for work areas with limited natural light, investigated the conditions under which the shredding of Fund documents takes place, and measured the amount of carbon monoxide in the air that garage attendants inhale.

Items as common as photocopiers and word processors are also checked. Photocopiers emit ozone; the gas is routinely trapped by internal devices if the copier is properly maintained. Enviro Dynamics tests photocopiers in the Fund and in some cases has recommended maintenance or a repositioning of the copier if the available ventilation was insufficient.

VDT screens—the video display terminals that provide monitors for word processing units—have long been held suspect. Jim Sharp notes that tests have apparently discounted any serious danger being posed by radiation. "Your television sets give off more radiation than a VDT screen," he observes. But widespread complaints about eye strain and fatigue seem to have more basis in fact. "The first VDT screens were very fuzzy," Liam Keane says. "The initial ones had very few dots per character and their screens were poorly designed. The curvature of the screen reflected everything back. Those who used them often did experience eye strain."

Liam Keane believes that the problems posed by technology will be answered by technology; much improved resolution and better designed screens seem to be in the offing. Better designed work stations offer interim relief. He advises low overhead lighting to reduce glare and placement of a light directly over the source document. Of course, he admits with a laugh, there's usually much room for improving the quality of the original documents. "Many bosses expect their people to sit at terminals for eight hours deciphering all sorts of handwritten squiggles and scratches."

Indeed, he emphasizes, psychological factors are at least as important here as physical ones. Control—or lack of control—is often a critical ingredient. "Managers wonder why they can spend ten hours doing something interesting on the screen and their secretaries complain after only four hours. Well, if you could give the secretaries something that interested and engaged them, the complaints would diminish. Conversely, if managers would type for hours on end from poorly drafted documents, they'd soon discover the source of their secretaries' fatigue. Ergonomics is a complex area, but the issue of control is very important."

In addition to its responsibilities for monitoring the overall health of the Fund building, Enviro Dynamics still responds to individual complaints as well. These are normally routed through Patsy Coffey, in Staff Relations, if the problem seems to be of a medical nature, or to Geoffrey Vaughan, Chief of the Facilities Section, if it is a technical question. Complaints of rooms being too hot, too cold, too dry, or too dusty are common, but problems with cigarette smoke tend to head the list each year.

"Smoke follows the air flow pattern in an office," Liam Keane observes. "Those who are in front offices and who can't close doors to change that pattern often have no way of controlling the flow of smoke." His unit is able to track the flow of air in an office but is not always able to alter it substantially. "I've always been amazed at the lack of sensitivity of some smokers," Liam Keane muses. "They think it's alright to pollute people's air but wouldn't dream of polluting their water." Control of cigarette smoke in the Fund may eventually be viewed as an office management rather than an engineering problem.

Some complaints can be tied to allergic reactions. Dust content in the air can be measured and sometimes its source pinpointed—dust collected in an offending drape, for instance. The sources of other, more amorphous complaints are more difficult to track. "People will sometimes say, 'I feel sick in this office and these are my symptoms,'" Liam Keane notes. In examining the complaint he must consider both physical and psychological factors. Stress often can be a piece in the puzzle, sometimes a significant piece. While the physical environment is carefully measured and tested, he is also careful to query staff about other factors in the office. Is there a new supervisor, a change in the work load, a reorganization? He saw a noticeable increase in complaints, for instance, during and after the Fund's job grading exercise. It is often very, very difficult to separate the physical complaint and the psychological concern, he says.

Investigating environmental health concerns has its lighter side too. "We do get some odd complaints," Liam Keane laughs. "People call to say their plants are dying, for instance. We've had calls—not from the Fund—from people claiming to have spotted strange little beasts on their plants. They feared someone had been traveling and brought back some sort of infection. We eventually got hold of the insect and brought it to an entomologist who looked at it under a microscope, counted its legs and what not, and proclaimed it a house pet, basically."

The question of house pets also raised the topic of cockroaches. Liam Keane seems resigned to their ubiquitousness, but takes great interest in the chemicals used to control their visits. "The cockroaches are getting hardier and hardier. They are loving the chemicals we're throwing at them. We do keep track of the spraying that's done in office buildings, though, because people can be sensitive to the chemicals used." Before any major application of insecticides at the Fund, Administration notifies Liam Keane of the chemicals to be used.

For the Fund's part, both Patsy Coffey and Geoffrey Vaughan confirm that the institution sees it to its advantage to investigate complaints quickly and professionally and to seek to maintain a high standard of environmental health. Either Patsy Coffey or Geoffrey Vaughan can initiate a request for Enviro Dynamics' services. If it is suspected that a reported medical condition, such as an allergy, is related to environmental circumstances, the Joint Medical Department may also initiate a request. Liam Keane sees their cooperation, and in a larger sense the institution's, as vital to his own efforts. "It has to be a combined effort," he says, "or we are talking to the wind."

Typically measures are taken by the Fund before Enviro Dynamics is called in. If the cause of the concern can be identified and fixed by the engineers, for instance, it is handled in that manner. Geoffrey Vaughan does not hesitate, he says, to call them when the nature or the solution of a problem is in question. He has also sought Enviro Dynamics' input at the planning stages of several renovation projects and in evaluating space management issues. "It is valuable to have someone with Liam Keane's credentials," he says, "involved in space management issues, particularly since the Fund is so crowded. I have been very impressed with them—they know how to identify a problem and come up with solutions."

The Fund uses an engineering team from Shannon & Luchs to maintain the Fund building. They are, Geoffrey Vaughan believes, "a highly motivated group with a very sophisticated monitoring system." He also commends a very supportive management that has been responsive to requests for a good environment. Liam Keane concurs. "The Fund building is in good shape and is maintained very well. You can always design something better but given the reality, it is very well run. One of the best, in fact, that I have been in."

Preventive environmental health is a fairly new priority among big organizations but it reflects, Liam Keane feels, a growing awareness among these organizations that "greater productivity will result from a better environment and people feeling better about that environment. People are their productivity devices. It would be meaningless to put millions of dollars into computers, for instance, if the people who would be using them are dissatisfied and would simply hit control+alt+delete every now and then."

COFFEE, COMPUTERS, AND MID-AFTERNOON GRINDS

The first day it was annoying--but those things happen, you know. The second day was frustrating, though, and by the third day things had reached a downright alarming state. No expresso. And that same hand-scrawled note taped over the coin slot. "Out of order."

It didn't bode well. An expresso machine unable to right itself after three days must be suffering from something very serious indeed. To say nothing about the predicament staff members found themselves in, having to stave off mid-afternoon doldrums with nothing more than wimpy "regular" coffee and iron will.

***How does one cope?** Stacks of work, mid-afternoon energy crises, and no expresso. Glennys George ponders the dire circumstances.*

As it happened, the situation was desperate in all quarters. The expresso machine had been found to pose a clear and present danger to the newly renovated Data Center just below it. To avoid potentially major damage to the liquid-sensitive Burroughs mainframe, the machine was disconnected. Pam Westcott, project manager for the renovation of the Data Center, breathed a bit easier. The problem with the expresso machine drainage was discovered just a day before the sprinkler system discharged in the hallway of the Center during a test. "I've been working on the Data Center project for over a year," she sighed. "Those weren't my two most favorite days."

The good news in all this is that expresso aficionados are to be doubly rewarded for their recent abstinence. A new beverage center, located in the hallway between the cafeteria and the sandwich shop, contains two expresso machines.

Marriott leases its expresso machines from Silver Spoon, a company that handles French kitchen equipment. The expresso machines in the Fund and the Bank represent some of the very few such machines in the Washington area. The Fund's machine has clearly been popular, dispensing an average of 100 cups a day.

Two machines, and continued location in a section of the cafeteria that is always open, may boost consumption further. Strategically repositioned and endowed with ready access to a service drain, the new beverage center may be poised to make a singular contribution to the mid-afternoon productivity of the Fund.

MANAGEMENT: AS EASY AS FALLING OFF A BIKE?

At a design review meeting *on follow-up activities to the management development program (from left to right) Joe Raff and Richard Schroeder, management consultants, Kappa Group, confer with Marlene Thorn, Personnel Officer, Training Unit, and Noel Jones, Career Development and Management Consultant.*

What makes a good manager? It depends on whom you ask. Fund managers offer a range of views. "I know how to manage," opines one, "if I didn't, I wouldn't have reached my current position." Another follows the Napoleonic dictum that offense is the best defense: "I get the job done. My job is not to make people happy." A third opts for biological determinism: "You have to be born a manager. You can't be taught how to manage." Finally there is the explanation much favored in the Fund: "I know economics. Management is not my bag."

Whether these statements are correct, partly correct, or totally off the wall is not really the point. These views exist, and hardly in isolated instances. They do, in fact, form the basis for running many an office. Ask the "managed" masses! The Fund's training expert, Marlene Thorn of the Staff Development Division, offers one explanation: "In the Fund 'management' is a noun, not a verb." Grammatical laxity aside, her observation reflects a growing awareness within the Fund's Administration Department, and among senior staff, that the Fund needs to develop its management and human resources and make better use of its financial and technical resources.

This is not an easy task. Noel Jones, a consultant with the Staff Development Division who was hired to help develop management and human resource skills, among other things, points out a basic shortcoming. "There hasn't been a culture of management in the Fund. Priority has been given to one discipline—economics. As a result, you don't develop in the job as a manager." To fill this gap, he says that the Fund is trying to strengthen management expertise in the institution.

This commitment explains those sudden absences of senior staff from various departments and units. No travel authorizations; no travel bookings. One day they're here and the next they are calling long distance from some hotel. What takes these staff away for a week at a time?

A series of residential courses under the rubric of a Management Development Program (MDP to the cognoscenti) has been organized by the Staff Development Division. Ten such gatherings have now been held since the program began in FY1986. The program consists of a core residential course with follow-up activities designed to introduce managers to human resource and technical management skills and to help them tackle not only their day-to-day work but also to promote the professional growth of their staff.

The genesis of this program can be traced to the 1984 Working Group Report on Management/Supervisory Issues that emerged out of the concerns of management, particularly those of the Deputy Managing Director, Richard Erb, who felt that the Fund was not paying enough attention to preparing its staff to be good managers. These concerns were simultaneously voiced by the Staff Association Committee. "Around 1983 there appeared a convergence of opinion between Administration and the Staff Association Committee on the need to actively guide and foster managerial skills," explains Horst Struckmeyer, Deputy Director of the Administration Department and the Chairman of the 1984 Working Group. The reason for this growing awareness and convergence of views, he continued, was that the Fund had tripled the size of its staff since 1960 and its operations had become more complex, making the older management systems and approaches unsuitable. There were emerging bottlenecks in the promotion ladder following the rapid rise of younger staff in the period of growth of the Fund. "Too few vacancies; too many pretenders," quipped Horst Struckmeyer.

The Working Group represented a cross section of Fund staff: Bijan Aghevli, Patrice Guilmard, Bruce

Hobbs, Peter Keller, Karim Nashashibi, Elena Frolia, and Moira Lavery. Al Goltz, of the Administration Department, served as the secretary, while Marlene Thorn helped as an external consultant. Many box lunches and many heated debates later, the Group produced its report. Longer-term personnel planning and a greater need to hold Fund supervisors accountable for their managerial functions were the two main areas on which the Group felt the Fund ought to concentrate its attention. Their recommendations covered a broad area, including better coordination of human resource management at the departmental level by one senior person, greater attention to potential managerial and supervisory skills at the time of recruitment of staff, more frequent and detailed performance appraisals, and mobility and training opportunities for staff to develop their skills.

In drafting its recommendations, the Group was aware of the Fund's previous attempts at fostering management skills. The American Management Association had run some in-house seminars in 1972 to introduce Fund supervisors to current concepts of management. In 1976 the Coverdale Organization introduced a series of residential courses to carry forward that theoretical approach. These courses took on added meaning in the wake of the attitude survey of 1977-78, which helped identify structural weaknesses in the Fund's supervisory system. Evaluations by participants in the Coverdale program and by the Administration Department indicated that there was a need for a more practical, Fund-oriented management program.

The need for such a program was further highlighted by the Working Group's report. The Fund hired the Kappa Group, a U.S.-based firm of management consultants, to design a program more suited to the Fund environment. The program they devised concentrates on developing skills for the management of human resources in the context of performance analysis as conducted in the Fund—in other words, to make Fund staff work better together while giving them an opportunity to improve their own professional skills. Placing this program in the context of performance evaluation exercises as well as communications and management theories, the Kappa Group consultants use case studies, videotaped demonstrations, and role playing to bring out the salient features of good management techniques and different management styles.

Fund managers take on the role of supervisors and subordinates at various stages of a continuing project, using the theoretical framework that the trainers from Kappa present during the program on different aspects of management. "Supervisors" assess the performance of lagging "employees," try to build up the confidence and professional skills of their subordinates, and attempt to evaluate their own performance. While such role playing is going on, a veritable Greek chorus of commentary emanates from the other participants. The ensuing debate tends to be heated and educational. The fact that the participants are "confined" to a conference center for the duration of the program means that much of the discussion spills over into the social gatherings at the end of each working day.

A total of 113 staff members have attended these programs since they began in 1986. Another fifty or so will have an opportunity to attend them during FY1989. Graduates of this course include managers and potential managers (mainly from the ranks of Assistant Division Chiefs or Unit Chiefs) from across the Fund. Participants are selected by departments in consultation with the Administration Department. A number of Deputy Directors have attended, though only two Directors have taken the course as yet.

The reaction of Peter Heller of the Fiscal Affairs Department is representative of the views of many participants in the training program: "It provoked me to think about a lot of management issues in the Fund that I hadn't thought of before—evaluating performance, interviewing people, and so on. It gave me new ideas." As a result, he spent much longer on the annual performance review exercise, giving his staff a greater opportunity to raise issues and work with him on ways to improve their performance.

One reason for the generally positive reaction to the Management Development Program was, in the words of Saleh Nsouli of the African Department, that "the program was very well structured. It covered a lot of material in a very short period. But it was not crammed. It gave us time to digest and think about what we had learned." While some participants felt that the program merely codified a lot of their on-the-job managerial experience, a few felt that it helped break down some of the barriers to learning how to manage in the Fund.

"If the course did nothing else (and it did much more), it destroyed the myth that exists in the minds of Fund middle-level managers that 'I know economics but nothing about management,'" said Brian Stuart of ETR. "This attitude creates a mental block against learning about management. Gosh! you say to yourself, I'll need a sabbatical to take a management course. The program shows you that it's not a magical thing. Management is a lot of hard work, but once you've been introduced to it at the MDP, the mental block is broken." His experience was that you could supplement your training with books, articles, and videotapes on management, eliminating the need for long external training.

A number of staff felt that some Fund managers do not make an effort to do some of the basic things that the Management Development Training teaches. "If they adopt even the simplest approaches, for example, telling subordinates what is expected of them at the beginning of the year rather than at the time of the annual review, it would go a long way to improving the atmosphere in the Fund," noted one graduate of the program. "Manage-

***At an open house** that serves as a follow up to the residential management development program, Noel Jones (left) discusses the various resources that the Fund's Learning Center has to offer. Here Noel Jones previews several of the videotapes that the Center has on effective communications for (left to right) Jo Longnecker, Dick Stillson, Dominique Berthet, Patrick Delannoy, Shuja Nawaz, and Patricia Chabrier.*

ment is not a hobby, though," he warned, "you need to spend a good deal of time on it." This includes following up the program through consultation with Administration Department personnel, reading books and listening to tapes, and putting greater preparation into staff interviews and performance reviews.

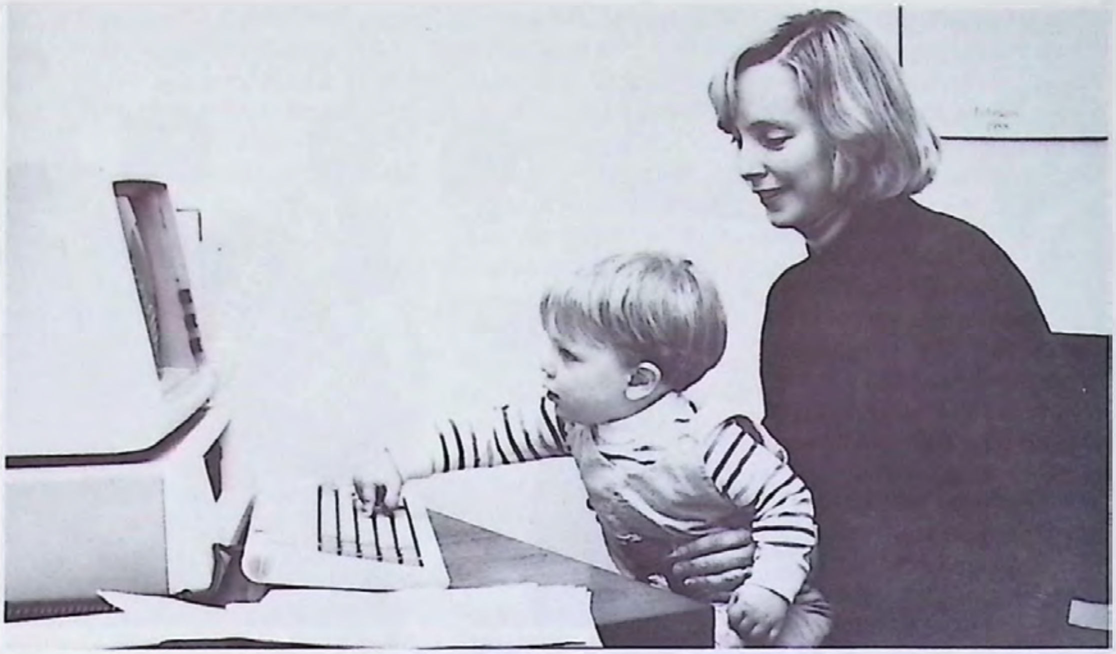
The Fund has attempted to build on the experience gained at the program by including a full-time shepherd for this course in the shape of Noel Jones. An Irish export (pardon the pun), who brings to the Fund a varied background in international management consultancy, strategic planning, and psychology, Noel Jones helps Marlene Thorn carry forward the work of the Kappa Group consultants by holding follow-up discussions with participants and arranging special assistance for staff and units that request it. The range of follow-up activities includes one-on-one consultations, workshops, seminars, issue lunches, a Learning Center Open House, and quarterly mailings.

The Learning Center is the focus of many of these follow-up activities. Its many audio and video tapes offer an array of management lessons and guides, ranging over many aspects of career development, language training, and management development. While videotapes of, say, "Meetings, Bloody Meetings," or the audio cassette, "More Than a Gut Feeling (Conducting an Interview)" may not win an Oscar or Grammy, they may enlighten the would-be manager.

We've heard all this before, you might say, and why not? After all, management is not viewed by many staff as the key to promotion in the Fund. Al Goltz sees that changing: "We're putting more emphasis on management and supervisory skills now than, say, in the early 1970s." He and his colleagues in the Staff Development Division help prepare managers and potential managers, by involving them in the Management Development Program. They are trying to drive home a shift in emphasis signaled by Deputy Managing Director Richard Erb: managerial skills will now be given more weight in assessing staff for promotion to supervisory positions. You may have noticed that extra section in the annual performance report that calls for an evaluation of the supervisory skills of staff who have some such duties or show the potential for such responsibilities.

The response to the program at the highest levels has been less than overwhelming. "Not all Directors and Deputy Directors have given their full support yet," observes Al Goltz. That is perhaps why most participants have been from the middle management level. But he is heartened by the heightened concern within the institution. It is in this climate of acceptance that Noel Jones and Marlene Thorn hope to develop a series of ancillary activities that will strengthen the Management Development Program. They see it as a long-term process, in which the residential course would be followed by other courses selected by individual participants according to their needs. Workshops, consultations, university programs, and even mobility and departmental assignments could be offered to staff who need such help. The success of their efforts will not be in what participants *say* but in what they *do* back on the job. In the final analysis, the assessment of a good manager rests not only with supervisors but also with subordinates.

Shuja Nawaz



Home and office *are never very separate for working parents. Pam Bradley, on a day off and en route to her son's doctor, stopped by her office to pick up work. Her son, Brian, lent a hand at the computer.*

WORKING PARENTS AT THE FUND: THE ISSUES AREN'T CHILD'S PLAY

Few parents would quarrel with Canadian psychiatrist G. Brock Chisholm, who maintained that "the most important thing in the world today is the bringing up of children." For working parents, including some 450 in the Fund—the task is complicated by having to share that responsibility with strangers. Choosing the right child care arrangement thus becomes one of the most important, and difficult, decisions they will ever make. Kristy Pettie, European Department, found the process "really scary," and Amber Martini, of the Asian Department, described it as "nerve-racking." Many parents begin the search for child care well before their baby is born; for many it is not a onetime process. Circumstances often force parents to repeat it many times over before they can find a stable and acceptable arrangement.

Permanent, day-to-day child care arrangements are only part of the issue. When both parents work, they must also arrange for emergency care when their child becomes sick, when their care provider is ill or absent, or when their day-care facility is closed. And with the number of women entering the work force on the rise, more parents are having to grapple with these issues.

Day-care services have not kept pace with the demand for them and, according to the U.S.-based Children's Defense Fund, supply will fall even further behind demand in the coming years. Several local employers, including the following federal government agencies, have helped fill the gap by opening on-site day-care centers: the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services, as well as the U.S. House and Senate. The General Services Administration, the Office of Personnel Management, and the Department of the Interior opened a joint facility in September 1987. Most accept children between two and five years old and charge between $65 and $95 a week. The District Government recently followed suit. Concluding that District agencies could improve productivity and morale and benefit from "lower absenteeism and turnover rates" if child care facilities were located at the work place, the D.C. City Council approved legislation in 1987 to provide such facilities.

What is the Fund's position on child care? Chris Ahl, Chief of the Fund's Staff Benefits Division, recalls that the Administration Department's concern over the issue dates back to the late 1970s. In 1981, the Executive Board agreed to make funds available to secure several slots in the Foggy Bottom Child Development Center (at 20th and G Streets) for the children of Fund staff. Only a small number of staff took advantage of this, however, and the arrangement fizzled out after a couple of years.

The day-care issue was revived when the Fund's Staff Association Committee circulated a child care questionnaire in late 1986. "Out of some 450 staff members with small children, 118 responded," Chris Ahl notes, "and the majority of respondents declared themselves satisfied with their current arrangements." Almost all the parents interviewed for this article also expressed satisfaction with their current arrangements, but they were quick to add that they had been through several arrangements and had found the search for quality child care a very stressful process.

Two findings emerged from SAC's survey: parents expressed interest in a conveniently located center and they felt the Fund could do more to help with child care expenses. Most respondents favored a new benefits program—some kind of voucher or allowance system.

Administration is not optimistic about being able to introduce such a benefits program into the Fund's compensation package. There is also, it believes, the important question of how far the Fund can go in providing separate benefits, beyond basic salary and dependency allowances, to cover specific needs and expenses. Moreover, differences in overall compensation based on family situations have always been controversial. At the time of SAC's day-care survey, a number of staff complained to Staff Benefits that too much was already being done for families. Others questioned whether day-care assistance should be provided when no help was offered to staff caring for elderly parents. Against this background, the Fund believes its involvement should be in the form of services rather than benefits.

One positive result of the Administration Department's cooperation with the SAC Day Care Working Group is the Fund's agreement with the World Bank Children's Center (WBCC) to allot a number of slots for the children of Fund staff in the WBCC. Months of wrangling over the number of slots, the Fund's contribution to the Center's overhead, and legal technicalities preceded the agreement. The frustrating outcome is that in the six months since the agreement was reached, only one Fund staffer has enrolled a child there. "We are disappointed after all the efforts that we made," Chris Ahl says, adding that some staff members had commented that the cost was fairly high. If easy access to the children were a major concern, however, he felt that this might outweigh the cost. Tuition at the World Bank Children's Center is $607 a month for children three months to two years; $542 for children two to three years; and $455 for children three to five—roughly comparable with other private downtown facilities.

Jim Corr, of Treasurer's considered the WBCC for his son, Christopher, but concluded "it's probably as expensive as a live-in nanny." He agrees that the response from Fund staff has been disappointing, but feels that "even for people at the higher grades, the cost of the WBCC is significant." Pam Bradley, also in Treasurer's, feels the same: "Even if I could get my children into the WBCC, it would cost me an arm and a leg, and I'd have to truck them in every day." Amber Martini looked at the WBCC after her third child was born, but considered the cost outrageous.

These staff members have all made alternative arrangements for day-to-day child care (choosing a live-in nanny or taking their child to a neighbor with a live-in nanny), but not without difficulty. The parents interviewed do not believe the Fund should make their arrangements for them, but do feel there could be greater recognition of their concerns. What could the Fund realistically provide? Most cited a broader definition of sick leave so that parents would not have to use annual leave to care for a sick child and help with some type of emergency backup care.

On the subject of sick leave, Ali Mansoor (on external assignment in the World Bank) thinks there could be "greater understanding at an institutional level. Right now," he observes, "it's more at a human level." At present, sick leave is defined as just that—leave taken when the employee is too ill to work. Chris Ahl recognizes that many parents would welcome some kind of statement from the Fund that it understands and wants to accommodate their concerns, but he believes that a more liberal use of sick leave should not be part of such a statement.

Chris Ahl thinks that although work pressures may make it difficult a times, staff should be able to count on a degree of empathy and accommodation from their colleagues and superiors when they are faced with a family emergency. Indeed, the parents interviewed for this story, for the most part, have received sympathy and understanding. Amber Martini stresses that "if you don't have an understanding boss and you've got kids, it's a problem." One less fortunate staff member noted that her supervisor frequently cast aspersion on her commitment to her work and wondered aloud whether she should be included in training scheduled for her unit.

The Fund believes its annual leave is generous enough to cover family emergencies, whether a sick child, an ill parent, or lesser household problems. Some staff agree, one parent noting that "quite a lot of people in this organization find themselves each year trying to avoid losing their leave because their balance is running over 60 days. It's almost a relief to have a reason to use it."

Most working parents interviewed—especially those with children in the zero to five age group—took a dimmer view, however. The number of days a child must stay home from the day-care center or from a baby sitter's house can add up. Certainly tending to a sick child can be every bit as exhausting as being sick oneself. Nancy Happe (European Department) points out that "taking a screaming child to the doctor is not relaxing." While not wanting to appear unsympathetic, Chris Ahl stresses the need to maintain the integrity and clarity of a policy that should provide equitable treatment to all staff. He also feels it would be impossible to determine, on a case-by-case basis, the circumstances that justify exceptions. "For this reason," he recalls, "we abandoned a provision for 'special leave' in 1976 and increased the annual leave instead. Special leave covered a whole variety of situations, including illnesses or accidents in the staff member's immediate family, but it became impossible to administer."

For staff who do not have a live-in nanny, a child's illness not only necessitates using annual leave but also dealing with an unexpected interruption of office work. Claire Liuksila, of the European Department, describes the familiar dilemma: "You feel as though you are looking over the edge of a cliff. You know you have responsibilities at home but you are also very aware of your duty toward your job."

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The cost of the Fund's current basic membership is about $1,000. The enhanced membership would cost an estimated $20,000, calculated not only on a higher membership fee but also on the total number of employees between the ages of 22 and 50. It is not based on the number of staff who would actually use the service.

Administration is not sure that the cost of expanded membership would be justified by the service provided, since the only difference between the memberships is in the personal service given through the Network's referral system. Chris Ahl does not wish to rule out subscribing to the expanded service in the future, but he says "we need to consider how far the Fund can go in providing assistance on an individual basis in this area." The Fund wants more experience with the Network before it considers a greater commitment of resources to it.

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Kristy Pettie has already arranged with her department to work part time for one year. "I wish I could do this indefinitely," she says, but the limit on temporary part-time arrangements is two years. Although she was able to go part time without too much difficulty, her impression is that some departments are less willing than others to accommodate their employees. Anne Johannessen (Central Banking) also likes the idea of part-time work, but she would like the Fund to permit various part-time schedules. In fact, says Chris Ahl, there is considerable flexibility, as long as the staff member and the department agree on the number of hours and on a schedule for those hours. Emily Walker (Office of Executive Directors), Claire Liuksila, and several other parents all expressed interest in working part time but felt it might not be practical in their positions.

According to Chris Ahl, the Fund's policy on part-time work came about partly in response to staff members who wanted to spend more time with their small children. The number of people who can be on temporary part-time status at any one time was originally limited to 20, but was then expanded to 25 a few years ago, when interest grew. Surprisingly, the number of staff working part time has declined in recent years. Currently only about a dozen staff members are working on this basis. Chris Ahl does not feel that departments have discouraged people from working part time. But indefinite part-time arrangements will always be difficult to provide, he observes, because relatively few positions in the Fund lend themselves to part-time work on a permanent basis.

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Still others urge that new options be explored. One wondered whether a "menu" approach to benefits might be considered, so that, for example, a staff member could opt to exchange a spouse or education subsidy for a child care allowance. Ali Mansoor suggests that "if the Fund is willing to do something, but does not want to provide an explicit subsidy to parents, it could, alternatively, give a subsidy to help defray operating costs at the WBCC." This would be in addition to the Fund's contribution to the center's overhead costs.

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THE HUMAN SIDE OF TECHNOLOGY

An Interview with Omar Albertelli

Omar Albertelli joined the Fund staff in 1965. After a year at the Bureau of Statistics, he worked in the Western Hemisphere Department until 1983. Over the years he has worked with North American and Caribbean countries and served as a Resident Representative in Central America. He has been Chief of the External Training Division at the IMF Institute since 1984. Omar Albertelli doesn't consider himself a computer expert but in early 1987 he began an innovative project that would apply computer technology to the development of improved training aids. He talks here about the nature of that project, the heart of which is a desktop publishing operation, and its impact on the work of his division.

How does your computer project fit into the Institute's overall training activities?

The External Training Division is responsible for providing management, administrative, and substantive support for the Institute's training of government officials in the field. It is in the context of this work that we hope to develop tools that Institute staff can use to improve the quality of training in the field while reducing training costs per project.

Training in the field has great potential. You can go to a country and explain to the government technicians who deal with Fund missions why missions ask for certain information and how they use this to prepare analytical reports and financial programs for that country. In a very practical way, you can give those technicians some basic tools so that they can prepare, or better prepare, analytical reports and financial programs. This can, of course, be useful for both their own countries and Fund missions.

Training in the field, however, is a small program with limited resources. An important challenge for us, then, is to devise ways so that the Institute can, if it wishes, stretch the training dollars to reach more people.

The external training program has two constraints. One is the availability of staff to travel for this purpose. Another is the size of the travel budget. Normally the Institute organizes no more than five workshops in the field a year. The Institute follows the rule of thumb that effective training calls for no more than ten trainees per trainer. If you have an average of twenty participants per project, you are talking about ten man-trips a year. You are reaching 100 trainees in five countries.

My view is that improved training aids can, in some circumstances, increase the ratio of trainees per trainer without unacceptable losses in training effectiveness. If we could increase the ratio of trainees per trainer from ten to, say, twenty, the Fund could potentially use the same ten man-trips to reach 200 trainees in ten countries.

In our external training workshops, participants split into small working groups to do the same practical work that missions do: financial analysis and programming. Within that context, trainers do three things: they furnish information, give guidance, and provide feedback.

I believe a good training manual can measurably reduce the time trainers spend in the field giving information and guidance for the practical work. This time could be further reduced, I feel, if effective audiovisual aids are also available.

Obviously not every case will warrant the use of training aids in this way, and not every trainer will use all training aids effectively. The availability of more effective training aids, however, would give Institute management and its staff the opportunity to do more at no extra cost if they feel their use is appropriate in a given situation. My role, as I see it, is not to "sell" this approach but to provide trainers with this opportunity.

How has computer technology helped you improve training aids?

Before we began working with computers we used typewritten materials. They looked like the typical Fund document—SMs, DMs, Working Papers, etc. That made me wonder whether new technology could now give us the capacity to produce even more effective means of communication in a training situation. People being trained abroad can rarely afford long periods of time to carefully read and digest page after page of complex text. Training documents have to be prepared, drafted, and designed to communicate quickly and effectively.

So far we have used the computers to design and produce training manuals. We are just beginning to explore using the computer to develop audiovisual aids, including materials for overhead projectors and slides. Another area that intrigues me is the direct use of the computer in presentations in the field, either with overhead projectors or with large display monitors. We are learning to use presentation programs that provide interesting visual effects, including animation.

Designing training aids for the field will always present special challenges, for example, the availability of compatible equipment at the training site and, in some countries, the reliability of the electricity supply, and the portability of our own equipment.

An additional element, which we have only just begun to explore, is computer-aided instruction. If computer-aided instruction can help us, we can start providing feedback as well as information and guidance. For example, if participants are simulating the preparation of a financial program, and are using a computer, that computer could have embedded in it the knowledge of the trainer. A properly designed system of computer-aided, video-interactive instruction can provide at least some of the feedback that a trainer now provides in the field.

Beyond that I also want to look into computer-based telecommunications to provide training support from headquarters. Modems now permit computers to talk with other computers. It's not hard to visualize that we could, in some cases, conduct a training course for a country in that country without leaving Washington. We could supply a good manual and audiovisual aids, and send them a computer-aided program so that they also get some basic feedback. We could communicate and provide immediate and more complete feedback via modems and via facsimile machines. In our shop we already have modems, and we could today convert our computer and scanner into a facsimile machine. I am envisaging a new version of the old idea of a correspondence course, but with enhanced feedback. Teleconferencing is a more remote possibility, not in the cards for us in the foreseeable future.

What equipment, and software, are you using?

Our hardware consists of an IBM-PC AT, a HP LaserJet Series II printer, and a Datacopy 730 scanner. With these we use a number of software packages. A good, easy, powerful chart program, for instance, is vital for us because we believe the visual aspect of a training manual is very important. With pictures you can communicate so much easier than with words alone. We use both Harvard Graphics and Boeing Graph for our charts.

Our basic word processing software is WordPerfect, and we use Lotus 1,2,3 for tables. We asked ourselves what the characteristics of text should be for training manuals. We believe it should possess a simple strong style and be easy to read, concise, and clear and unambiguous. There is no substitute for a trainer knowing how to write well, but something else instills discipline—an editor.

We don't have that luxury, but we can use the computer as a backup, as a second-best solution. We use what are called "style analyzers," which are similar to the spelling check that word processing software uses. These check our text for grammatical usage and such things as use of passive voice, length of sentences and paragraphs, the use of unusual words—very important here with all the jargon used—and the ambiguity of words or phrases. These are mechanical checks and one has to use them intelligently and carefully. While the software can be customized—through the creation of specialized dictionaries of words and expressions—we have chosen not to do that. I believe that if we have anything worthwhile to say, we should say it in plain simple English.

What ties all of this together—the graphics, text, and the design component—is our desktop publishing software, Ventura Publisher. The real breakthrough for us has been the control and self-sufficiency that this gives us. You can experiment with different approaches on the screen—experiment until you hit upon the layout that will be most effective.

Desktop publishing gives us the power and flexibility to design and produce our own documents. Because of the practical, country-specific nature of our exercises, we rarely print more than sixty manuals. We won't use that manual in other countries and it simply is not cost-effective to typeset something for so few copies. But now we can get that professional look—and the opportunity to develop more effective means of communication—by doing it ourselves. We produce an original and then have it photocopied and bound in the Graphics Section.

The process does have some drawbacks. Perhaps our principal problem has been with paper. We have experimented with different types of paper stock. Some have been ideal in terms of thickness, durability, and opaqueness, but the photocopying machines are not equipped to handle heavier stock paper. We have not yet found our ideal paper.

We also took this opportunity to re-examine the type of binding we use. We wanted something that could be opened flat for use in the workshops and yet be durable. We didn't want pages flying all over the place halfway through the course. We had been stapling papers, but this meant people would go to the training sessions with a stack of papers or perhaps forget the particular one they needed for that session. Now we have everything bound and in one volume, which makes it more efficient too.

What criteria did you use to select your equipment?

We had two criteria. The first was that the equipment had to support a desktop operation. We wanted a self-contained system that was powerful enough to give us quite a range of design options and typography choices and flexible enough to allow us to easily adapt our layouts to very specialized needs.

With that degree of control and flexibility, people will use the system and begin to explore the possibilities of desktop publishing. If you are imaginative, you will use the constant feedback it provides and discover new uses for the system. Having control of the production process is important, I think, because the more elements of the process that are out of your control, the more likely it is that your enthusiasm to experiment will be dampened. If other people have to make corrections for you every time you change your mind or have a new idea, they will likely become exasperated. They will say, 'well, are you sure?' and you may begin to hesitate or even cease to innovate. Having a system that allows you to make changes on the screen, and experiment with different formats or designs, encourages you to be creative and explore new options. It was very important to us to have a desktop operation.

The second criterion we had was that the system must be affordable to minimize the budgetary constraints. The era of big centralized systems is out, at least as far as we were concerned. In fact the project got off the ground and keeps running mainly with my own funds and with our own off-duty work. I have bought most of the equipment and software that we are using. We can do this because it is a small operation.

We created a small shop, but then there was a question of space. To make room for our equipment, I got rid of some of my own furniture and split my office. My principle, really, is that if you have a vision of what has to be done, pursue that vision. Particularly when the project is experimental and the institution's resources are very tight, perhaps you should spend your own money. If your experiment doesn't work out, then it's ok. It wasn't the institution's money and you can start all over.

What impact has all this had on your division's work?

The efficiency you hope to achieve by introducing technology doesn't come about automatically. If you don't change the work culture, you won't benefit from the potentially greater efficiency. The change, of course, has to be voluntary; it cannot be imposed from the top.

Economists in the External Training Division invested time in learning how to use WordPerfect. Once they did, they found it more efficient to put their ideas directly on the screen. Rather than send a handwritten draft to a secretary, get back a typed draft, correct it and send that back, and then repeat that process several times, it has become much more efficient for them to combine the mechanical and creative processes. They type and revise the drafts and the secretaries then edit and finalize these.

The changes have also affected the secretaries. As technology allows the professionals to do more of the mechanical things efficiently, it releases secretarial time for more productive and interesting things. Jeanine Moeis, the head secretary for our division, now spends much of her time editing for clarity and sense, as well as proofreading, and doing some of the desktop publishing work for the training manuals.

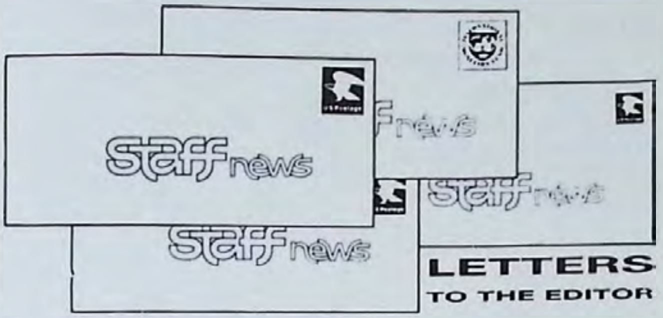
There have been changes in the work rules all around, but of course there have been problems, too. We tend to be slow in recognizing those changes. We naturally associate prestige and position with certain traditional tasks.

If we really use computer technology, not simply run a regression every once in a while, we *have* to alter the work rules. We have dedicated people here who are working under different rules without recognition. They do it simply because they are motivated to work.

Another aspect that is very important to me is the question of the morale of the team. Our division is small and tends to see itself at the edge of things. The job grading exercise, in some cases, and the effect of budgetary constraints on salary increases and promotions have also had an impact on morale.

I looked on our project as an opportunity to rally people and say here is a mission, here is what we should try to achieve. Look at the fun we can have, the challenge we can meet. It brings our division together and gives us a sense of purpose, a challenge. It is hard, but it is fun too. This is the human side of technology.

__Omar Albertelli and Jeanine Moeis__ demonstrate a computer animation program on their IBM-PC. Omar Albertelli is exploring the use of animated presentations for external training aids. This is only one of several new techniques that might provide trainers in the field with even more effective means of conveying information and concepts.



Why are secretaries not paid overtime on missions for work beyond the 40-hour work week? If staff members working at the Annual Meetings here or overseas are paid overtime, then why shouldn't secretaries on mission be eligible for overtime as well? Mission conditions are not always ideal; the workload can be tremendous; and we are expected to be on the job 15-18 hours a day for up to two weeks without any compensation, except being grateful for a day or two of compensatory leave, if we're lucky. Payment for overtime work performed on missions should follow the same rules as at headquarters.

Fewer and fewer secretaries are willing to travel. Is it because of the mission workload? The health risk in some areas? The sometimes questionable availability of necessities such as food? A paycheck comparable to work performed might encourage more secretaries to travel.

Valerie Pabst

On Letters to the Editor

From time to time questions arise about how Letters to the Editor of *Staff News* are processed. To be considered for publication, all letters to the editor must be signed. We prefer to publish letters with the staff member's signature. As a matter of policy, letters are published upon receipt, space permitting. When a response is not available for publication in the same issue, the reply will be published separately at a later date.

Letters should be addressed to the editor of *Staff News*, Sheila Meehan, and sent to Room 10-525. If there are comments or questions about Letters to the Editor, or about other aspects of *Staff News*, please contact the editor at x8293.

Gisli Blondal, an Advisor in the Fiscal Affairs Department, died on the morning of February 19, 1988, after suffering a heart attack while driving to work.

Gisli Blondal was born in Iceland in 1935 and took his Ph.D. at the London School of Economics in 1965. He served as Budget Director in the Icelandic Ministry of Finance from 1967 to 1978 and in 1980-81. During 1978-80 he was the Alternate Executive Director in the Fund for the Nordic countries. He joined the Fiscal Affairs Department in 1981 and led many technical assistance missions, most recently to Bangladesh, Fiji, Jordan, and the Solomon Islands. He was a valued colleague and will be greatly missed.

STAFF NOTES

(February 1-February 29, 1988)

TWENTY-FIVE YEAR STAFF

A. Gilo Muirragui

TWENTY YEAR STAFF

E.-A. Conrad
Leif Mutén

RESIGNATIONS

Toshihiko Sasaki
Bahram Tamami
Adrienne F. Watts
Carol A. Wilkinson

RETIREES

Ekhard O.C. Brehmer

BIRTHS

To **Neena Kapur** (TRE) and her husband, Sushant, a son, Aneesh Kumar Kapur, on September 24, 1987.

DEATH OF RETIREES

Althea B. Allen
L. Ruben Azocar

TRANSFERS

Nermin A. Abaza to Secretary's Department from the OED

Patricia D. Brenner to the Exchange and Trade Relations Department from WHD

TRANSFERS *(Continued)*

Kathleen E. Cullinane to Fiscal Affairs Department from the Office in Geneva

Anna Maria De Leva to the African Department from the Support Group, Secretarial Staff

Guler Fitzgerald to the Support Group, Secretarial Staff, from the Fiscal Affairs Department

George F. Kopits to the Fiscal Affairs Department from the European Department

Karim Nashashibi to the Fiscal Affairs Department from the Middle Eastern Department