

PUBLISHED BY MINNESOTA ADVOCATES

HUMAN RIGHTS



FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

OBSERVER

Volume IX, Issue 1
September 1996

Child Mortality and Human Rights

New project brings human rights law to fight for child survival

This year, across the developing world, 12.2 million children under the age of five will die largely from preventable diseases. Advances in child survival have reached only a portion of the children around the globe. Even within developed countries, there are significant discrepancies in child mortality rates for certain populations. How can human rights law be harnessed to promote cost-effective measures to increase child survival?

Minnesota Advocates has launched an innovative project bringing the tools of international human rights law to bear on the problem of child mortality. An interdisciplinary team of professionals from public health, law, medicine, and the social sciences will study the rates and causes of child mortality (under age five) in three countries and make recommendations as to steps that can be taken by governments and organizations to improve child survival and quality of life within the context of available resources. Much research already indicates that child mortality rates can be dramatically reduced by relatively simple, inexpensive measures.

Case studies of three countries will be the initial focus of the project. These countries reflect different levels of economic development: Uganda, Mexico and the Midwestern region of the United States (Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, Indianapolis and Minneapolis). The project is gathering the

available research and analyzing the data on under-five child mortality within each region. How do child mortality rates and causes differ among racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and urban/rural groups? We are interested in both the failures and successes in reducing child mortality.

In year one, the project will issue a report analyzing child mortality in each geographic location, setting forth the relevant obligations under international human rights law, and making recommendations as to cost-effective steps that should be taken to increase child survival.

The Ford Foundation and a gift from the plaintiffs in a health care settlement with Blue Cross Blue Shield have provided the support that allows Minnesota Advocates to take on this ground-breaking project. For years, human rights groups have focused on civil and political rights to the exclusion of the economic and social rights which are also an integral part of international law. The rights to health, shelter and

education, for example, have defied the normative framework under which human rights groups operate. Because these rights have been difficult to define, hard to enforce, and unpopular in the West, they have been largely ignored. By taking the specific problem of high child mortality, Minnesota Advocates bridges the gap between economic/social and civil/political rights. The issue of child survival touches both "sides" of the spectrum - implicating the right to health and children's rights, as well as the right to life, and rights involving freedom from discrimination. The practical case studies and concrete recommendations will bring new skills, new alliances and new points of advocacy to the protection of the entire continuum of human rights.

Volunteers are welcome to join the project. Please contact Nancy Arnison, Project Director at the Minnesota Advocates office if you are interested in volunteering. The project will also be hiring for two positions, see the job announcements on page 3. ■

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**DIRECTOR'S
DESK**

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Completing the Circle

The Child Mortality Project, described on page one of this newsletter, represents an exciting new step for Minnesota Advocates and for the human rights community. For too long, human rights advocates have focused all their attention on civil and political rights, while failing to complete the circle by monitoring abuses like the right to health, to education, and to an adequate standard of living.

Founding board member, Sam Heins, aptly observed: "It does seem out of balance to be complaining about the poor conditions in the prisons of a country where hundreds of thousands are dying from hunger and disease." Of course, we will not stop addressing prison conditions or the many other civil and political violations that we monitor. But we must also speak out about a government's obligations toward its children, who are dying from easily preventable causes, including infectious diseases, and lack of nutrition. Lives are at stake, and so are rights.

The Child Mortality Project is an example of the vital and innovative work being done in Minnesota Advocates. It is our hope that this project will focus the international human rights community on the world's children. In this way, we will finally begin to complete the circle of human rights protection. ■

Barbara A Frey

Frey Selected for Twin Cities International Citizen Award

Barbara Frey, Executive Director of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights will be one of six individuals to receive the 1996 Twin Cities International Citizen Awards at a dinner in St. Paul on October 17.

Frey has served as Executive Director of Minnesota Advocates for the last eleven years. She is also Chair of the St. Paul-Minneapolis Committee on Foreign Relations. Frey teaches international human rights law as an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota Law School as well as its Institute for International Studies. She lectures and publishes widely on human rights issues. In the last year alone, Frey made over 30 speaking appearances to more than 1200 people in the Twin Cities area on human rights topics. Frey was nominated by Mary Ranum and Tom Johnson, President and Past President of the Board of Directors.



The awards ceremony will be held on Thursday, October 17, 1996, from 6:00 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. at the Saint Paul University Club. Tickets to the dinner, hosted by Mayors Norm Coleman and Sharon Sayles Belton, are \$35 each. The keynote address will be by Michael H. Armacost, President of the Brookings Institution. If you are interested in attending, please call the awards committee at 612-673-2317 by October 11. ■

The *Human Rights Observer* is published by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights • 400 Second Avenue South, #1050 • Minneapolis, MN 55401-2408 U.S.A. • Phone: 612-341-3302 • Fax: 612-341-2971 • E-mail: mnadvocates@igc.apc.org • Internet: <http://www.umn.edu/humanrts/mnadvocates>.

Advocates Recommended for Special United Nations Status

At its August 1996 session in New York, the U.N. Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations acted to recommend Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights for special Consultative Status, Category II, to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Based on this status, the organization will be invited to provide information on its human rights findings and recommendations to the ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. ECOSOC is expected to grant this recommended status in October 1996.

ECOSOC recognizes that consultation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provides an important means of futherling the purposes and principles of the United Nations work. It therefore grants status to those NGOs which are known internationally for their expertise in subjects relevant to the U.N. Category II status is granted to organizations that have a general international concern in human rights, rather than a concern about one particular country, group or issue.

With Category II status, Minnesota Advocates will be able to make written and public statements to U.N. bodies including the Commission on Human Rights, the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities, and the treaty bodies that monitor states' compliance with major international human rights treaties on children's rights, race discrimination, discrimination against women, and many others. While Minnesota Advocates has long participated in these U.N. deliberations and drafting, the consultative status will offer more direct access to meetings and a higher profile in the debate.

Executive Director, Barbara Frey,

represented Minnesota Advocates at the August 26 session of the Committee on NGOs to defend the application for consultative status. The Committee is composed of 19 state members: Bulgaria, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ethiopia, Greece, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Madagascar, Paraguay, Philippines, the Russian Federation, Sudan, Swaziland, Tunisia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The Irish delegate, Mr. John Biggar, opened the discussion by stating his full support for granting status to Minnesota Advocates, noting especially the involvement of many well-known human rights experts in the work of the organization. The Irish delegate's only question was why the organization, given its broad international work, had applied for roster status -- the lowest level of consultative status -- rather than category II status. Several other state delegates echoed the sentiments of the Irish delegate, and Ms. Frey was allowed to amend the application orally to request category II status from the committee.

Other questions from the delegates concerned the structure of the organization's membership (which includes many international "group" memberships by partner NGOs as well as individual membership); the work of the organization with the War Crimes Tribunal on Former Yugoslavia; and with reason for having "Minnesota" in the organization's name. Ms. Frey indicated that keeping Minnesota in the name of the organization was a sign of the community's pride in its human rights work. The delegate of the U.K., noted that the name of the well known anti-hunger organization, Oxfam, derived from Oxford, England. He also noted that many good things originate in the State of Minnesota, including the

radio program "A Prairie Home Companion," featuring Garrison Keillor.

See UN STATUS, page 10

Join Our Staff:

Minnesota Advocates' new Child Mortality Project (see cover for project description) is currently accepting applications for :

Full-Time Project Coordinator:

Help PD to shape and manage the project. Seek expertise in public health, epidemiology, international primary health care and, possibly foreign aid issues. Requires excellent skills in research, analysis and writing. Should be highly organized, detail-oriented, and comfortable managing large amounts of information.

Part-Time Administrative Assistant:

Seek high-level computer skills for report preparation including graphs, maps and bibliographies, accuracy with numbers, ability to work in a team environment. Will communicate with volunteers, assist with foundation proposals, organize information and contact lists, maintain files, prepare agendas and correspondence, set up meetings, handle some clerical work. Applicants must work well independently in a busy environment.

Both positions are open immediately. Project is funded through July 1997 with possible extension thereafter. Send letter and resume to Nancy Arnison at the Minnesota Advocates office. Include a writing sample for Coordinator position. ■

More of the Same

Human rights violations outlast rhetoric in Mexico

One year ago, Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León vowed to make changes in Mexico's corrupt government system. In his September 1995 state of the union address, he urged "every Mexican to continue working toward the construction of a nation of laws, of a rule of law that can guarantee justice without exceptions, without privileges, without impunity." President Zedillo also claimed he would devote attention to making profound changes in the justice and public safety systems every day of his administration.

Now, more than a year since President Zedillo pledged to strive to end the privileges of the few, one must ask whether his promise has been upheld. Has the Mexican administration reformed Mexico's human rights practices — of which impunity traditionally plays so large a part? Or were the President Zedillo's words simply empty rhetoric? A look at the events of last year provide a troubling answer.

Guerrero

Fifteen months since the police killing of seventeen civilians near Aguas Blancas in Guerrero state, criminal prosecutions against low- and mid-level state officials grind through the ill-equipped state court system. In fact, proceedings have dragged so that the due process rights of the accused to a speedy trial have been flouted. Mexico's Supreme Court (like the National Human Rights Commission and Minnesota Advocates) determined that grave human rights violations had been committed during and after the Aguas Blancas assault by then Governor Rubén Figueroa Alcocer and his seconds-in-command. The Supreme Court's findings were ignored by federal authorities, who continue to reject their international obligations to provide justice and redress in the case. One Court Justice complained weeks after the release of the report that no prosecutors, either federal or state, had even sought access to case files the Court produced during its own investigations! Meanwhile, Figueroa Alcocer, shamed into resignation, is reportedly spending time in Boca Raton, Florida.

On the one year anniversary of the Aguas Blancas massacre, an armed rebel group — apparently unrelated to Chiapas' Zapatistas — surfaced, intending to wage war against the Mexican government. Though the origins and financing of this new Popular Revolutionary Army (known by the Spanish acronym EPR) remain unclear, the governmental response could not be crisper. Guerrero, as well as the neighboring state of Oaxaca, has been seriously militarized in recent months, as have other states throughout Mexico's

poverty stricken southern region. In addition, leaders of social organizations in Guerrero, presumed related or not to the newly-emerged guerrillas, have been detained and reportedly tortured. Politically-motivated assaults, not lacking in Guerrero in recent memory, have been on the upswing.

Chiapas

In Chiapas, violence committed by *pistoleros* and so-called White Guards (variant names for paramilitary style squads acting with official tolerance, or even training and encouragement) racks the northern part of the state, while peace talks haltingly proceed (the Zapatistas announced their withdrawal from talks as this newsletter goes to print). An increased rate of politically-related killings and intimidations in Bachajón, Tila, Sabanilla, Salta del Agua, Usipá and other Chiapas communities have instilled residents with fear, and with anger over the authorities' insufficient response. Officials, when they have not assisted in the formation of such squads, have turned a blind eye to the groups' development, and currently are faced with the bloody results. Human rights observers on the ground in Chiapas fear that the stage is being set for a "final" military solution to the conflict.

Rights under seige

As violence and the increasing militarization of Mexican society advance in tandem, a number of private individuals and institutions have taken President Zedillo's admonitions to heart, and daily attempt to seek justice and end impunity. And they are paying the price. Mexican human rights activists are under siege. Accused of subversion and defending criminals, defenders of human rights in Mexico face death threats and attack. At the same time authorities have routinely failed to investigate and prosecute those responsible for physical assaults and other intimidations suffered by our colleagues.

One young Mexican first-year law student recently told Minnesota Advocates representatives that he strongly believed that "if a law exists, it should be respected." His belief derives at least in part from his recent experience with Oaxaca's criminal justice system. Laws that President Zedillo purports to support should have protected him from being detained arbitrarily in June 1996. But as often happens in Mexico, they were ignored.

See RIGHTS, page 5

Winter 1997: Go to Mexico!

Study human rights • Earn CLEs



Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights and the Center for Global Education are pleased to announce an educational travel seminar focusing on human rights in Mexico. Participants will leave Minneapolis on Saturday, February 22, 1997, to return Saturday, March 1. Participants in the seminar --open to the interested public-- will study local and national human rights issues in Chiapas (site of the Zapatista rebellion) and Mexico City, and meet with representatives of nongovernmental organizations, state and federal government officials and others knowledgeable of Mexico's human rights practices. Barb Frey and Joel Mugge will lead the travel seminar. The package price of \$1695 will include all travel, room and board. Ten to fifteen CLE credits are anticipated. If interested in participating, please contact Clifford Rohde, Mexico Project Director. ■

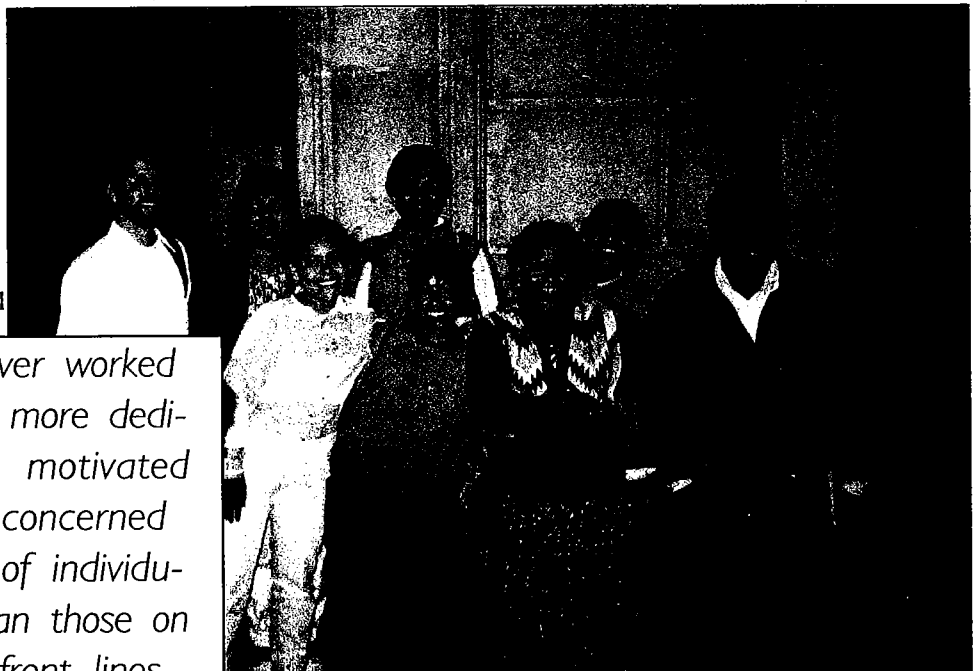
RIGHTS continued from page 4

He was taken by four armed men in civilian dress to a police station where agents beat him into "confessing" to a crime he did not commit.

Until the tormentors of this young man and other victims are punished, and the crimes against them are redressed, his hopes, like the Mexican government's perpetual promises of reform, will remain unfulfilled. ■

Mission investigates Oaxaca, Chiapas

Cliff Rohde, Mexico Project Director, and Mexico Project intern Edward Rice, a third-year law student at the University of Minnesota and recipient of a University of Minnesota Human Rights Center grant, conducted first-hand investigations in Oaxaca and Chiapas in July 1996, when this picture was taken. In Chiapas, Rohde and Rice focused on paramilitary-style violence affecting the northern part of the state, particularly in the town of Bachajón. In Bachajón in May 1996, local political tensions erupted, leaving six dead, a number of houses sacked and burned, and more than a hundred individuals displaced. The fighting came after a number of years in which the "Chinchulines," a powerful group affiliated with the ruling PRI, carried out acts of violence and intimidation against townspeople with little or no official governmental response. In Oaxaca the two Minnesota Advocates representatives conducted research and met with government officials, victims of human rights abuses, and human rights activists, among others, to complete an upcoming report on the critical human rights situation in the state. ■



I've never worked with a more dedicated, motivated and concerned group of individuals than those on the front lines defending human rights in Oaxaca.

*Cliff Rohde,
Mexico Project Director*

Clifford Rohde (far left), Mexico Project Director, with members of Oaxaca's newly-formed human rights network. Attorney Irma González (second from left) of the Mixteca Regional Human Rights Center and Father Wilfrido Mayrén (next to González) of the "Bartolomé Carraso" Regional Human Rights Center have suffered recent threats and intimidations related to their human rights work in Oaxaca.

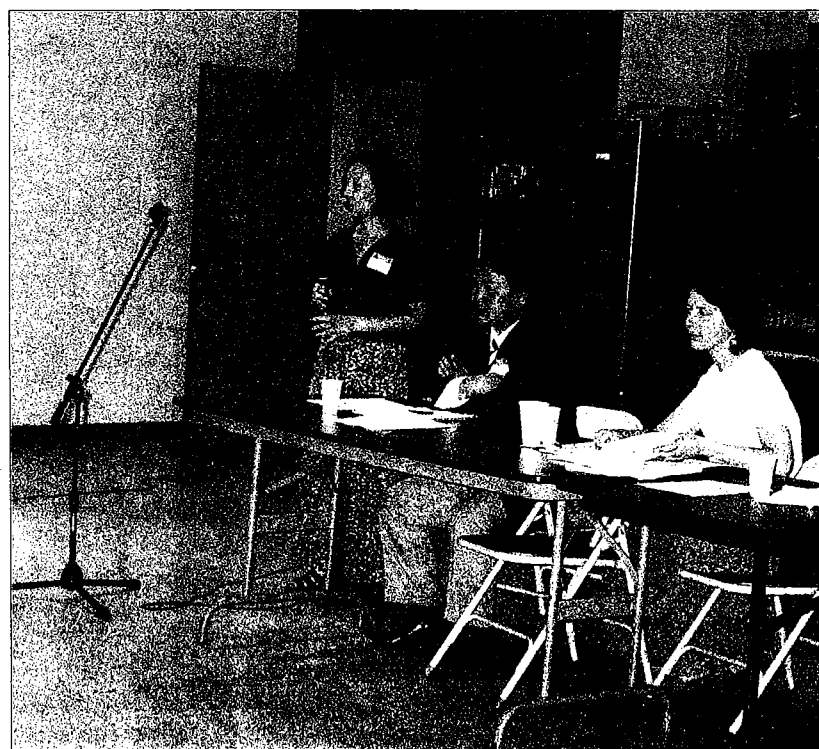
B.I.A.S. Sponsors Meeting with Hmong Community

Changes to Welfare and Immigration Policies Harmful to Immigrants

The new welfare bill recently signed by President Clinton and a pending immigration bill that now stands before a Congressional conference committee were two of the immigration topics discussed at an August 17 informational meeting co-sponsored by The B.I.A.S. Project (Building Immigrant Awareness and Support) of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights and seven local Hmong agencies. The event entitled "Immigration Issues and How They Affect You" drew over 150 members of the Hmong community who came to learn about these and other dramatic changes in immigration-related legislation.

The program which took place at Lao Family community in St. Paul, began with opening remarks by Ying Vang of Lao Family Community and Therese Gales of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights. Presentations focused on deportation and citizenship issues, as well as the pending immigration legislation and the new welfare bill. Presenters included Karen Ellingson, (Oficina Legal of the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota); Glenda Potter, (Cambodian Legal Services Project of Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services); Patricia Mattos (private attorney, St. Paul), and Laura Melnick (Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services). Neal Thao, Ramsey County Human Services and current St. Paul School Board member, served as moderator, and Morgan Thao of Moua International translated the presentations into Hmong. Pakou Ly, Constituent Advocate and Asian-Pacific Liaison of Senator Paul Wellstone's office, also addressed the audience and answered questions about the welfare bill.

See MEETING, page 7



Top: Participants at the meeting register at the door. Bottom: Pakou Ly, Constituent Advocate and Asian-Pacific Liaison of Senator Wellstone's office, answers questions about the new welfare bill. Neal Thao, event moderator, and Laura Melnick, are seated.



Above: A youth from the Hmong Cultural Center entertains meeting participants.

Below: Audience members listen to speakers explain changes in the bills.

Why should I be concerned about these bills? DID YOU KNOW:

☞ As this newsletter goes to print, differences between the House and Senate versions of the Immigration Bill are being debated in conference committee. The latest understanding of the legislation includes the following:

- ☐ The Gallegly amendment to the House-passed bill would allow states to deny public education to undocumented immigrant children.
- ☐ Expedited exclusion provisions would authorize low-level INS agents to make on-the-spot decisions at ports of entry, thereby jeopardizing traumatized asylum-seekers who are escaping persecution. Victims who fled countries of persecution without obtaining full immigration documentation may arrive exhausted from a harrowing journey, traumatized from torture, fearful of government authorities and confused about the asylum process. They need an opportunity to tell their story in a proper asylum proceeding.
- ☐ Income requirements for immigrant sponsors are still at issue. Any citizen or legal resident immigrant sponsoring a child or spouse must earn at least 140% of the poverty level, or 200% of the poverty level if sponsoring a sibling or parent. (NOTE: The *median* income for all of the U.S.'s full-time wage and salary workers is \$25,400, or just 163% of the poverty level for a family of four.)
- ☐ Intending immigrants who fall out of lawful immigration status may be ineligible to become residents of the U.S. unless they reside outside of the U.S. for 3 or 10 years.

☞ President Clinton signed the new welfare bill, called the "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996," on August 22, 1996. Among the harshest provisions of the law are those affecting non-citizen immigrants:

- ☐ Most legal non-citizen immigrants (with some exceptions, including refugees and aylees during their first five years in the U.S.) are no longer eligible for Food Stamps or SSI.
- ☐ Beginning January 1, 1997, States can choose to deny Medical Assistance, cash assistance (AFDC, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), and other social services to legal immigrants with some exceptions.
- ☐ New legal immigrants arriving after August 22, 1996, will be ineligible for most forms of Federal benefits for their first five years in the U.S. with some exceptions. New legal immigrants who arrive under the family preference system may be ineligible for benefits even after five years because their sponsors' income will be considered available to them, whether or not it is actually available.
- ☐ States will also be able to choose whether to exclude legal immigrants from benefits that are funded only with State funds. ■

Welfare bill information compliments of Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, Inc.



MEETING continued from page 6

Co-sponsoring agencies included the Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women, Centre for Asians and Pacific Islanders, Hmong American Partnership, Hmong Cultural Center, Hmong American Mutual Assistance Association, Lao Family Community, and Women's Association of Hmong and Lao.

After a question-and-answer period, the event concluded with a discussion on advocacy within the Hmong community, led by William Yang, Executive Director of Hmong American Partnership and Sai Lee Yang, Executive Director of the Hmong Cultural Center. Entertainment by the Hmong Cultural Center concluded the program. ■

Free and Fair Elections in Russia - With a Few Mistakes

Election observer Anne Bodley comments on the Russian Presidential Elections

By Anne Bodley, former Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights intern. Bodley was accredited as an International Election Observer for the Russian Presidential Elections. Election observation is one of the most common tools used to monitor the fundamental right of freedom to participate in government.

The Russian Presidential Elections were deemed "free and fair" by most everyone involved, and offered as proof that Russia has turned a corner toward embracing a democratic future. I agree. As an election observer, I visited tens of polling stations in Moscow; interviewed voters, poll Commissioners and party observers at the stations; tracked newspaper, radio, and television coverage; researched the electoral rules and regulations; and made a conscious effort to be aware of the conduct of the elections during the campaign, the vote, and the aftermath. I am happy to say that I also found no systemic or systematic abuse of the electoral system. However, it will surprise no one to know that mistakes were made and the elections were far from perfect.

The only truly serious issue from the elections, and the topic of many heated dinner party discussions, is that of the press's voluntary decision to support the candidacy of President Yeltsin -- and not to provide unbiased coverage of all presidential candidates. Coverage about Yeltsin changed from being critical of him six months before the election to being openly supportive, and the press freely acknowledged their opposition to the Communist party candidacy. The two major candidates platforms were simplified to the point where Jonathon Steele, of London's daily *The Guardian* noted that: "...television viewers were left at a loss for details on Yeltsin's and Zyuganov's economic programs... as if it was a simple choice between reform and reaction." President Yeltsin, of course, did not refuse the press's support; Communist party leader Gennady Zyuganov angrily denounced the press and attributed part of his failure at the polls to their coverage. Although the press's choice is a far cry from being state-sponsored censorship, it is nonetheless a blow to democracy and a truly "free press" for it to have take a deliberately partisan stance.

The very scarcity of issues concerning the paper-ballot election in a country of eleven time zones and 150 million people is surprising. Questions were raised about the

excessive mobility of the "mobile ballot boxes," small hand-carried ballot boxes taken directly to a voter's home, generally to enable the elderly and infirm to vote. Observers speculated that fraud might have occurred out of sight of observers and the public. There was other speculation about the impartiality of the Central Election Commission (who seemed on occasion to have a preference for Yeltsin); about the unusually high number of absentee ballots in Moscow and Moscow region (more than one-third); and about the absence of public disclosure rules for campaign financing. I visited tens of polling stations, trailed mobile ballot boxes around to people's homes, and toured psychiatric wards, military hospitals and the Bytyrki prisonto learn more about the proceeding. Most of the polling stations were thoroughly professional and well-run; but there were mistakes.

Our first visit on June 16th was to a military hospital on the outskirts of Moscow to watch the opening. By law the polling stations were supposed to open at 8:00 a.m., but the hospital was dark and still and our arrival set off a flurried rush of activity as they hastily began to set up. A hospital

attendant in a white lab coat hurriedly pulled down pro-Yeltsin campaign posters and shoved them into his pocket as he unbolted the door and flung on the lights. Inside the small room he showed us the curtained corner where voters would make their choices in private, the long table where the election officials would eventually register voters and hand them their ballots - and the ballot box itself, already sealed and draped decoratively in heavy red fabric. We were not able to examine the registration lists, could

not verify the number of ballots at the station, were unable to talk to the Commissioner about the proceedings, and although we shook the ballot box, we were unable to know if it was in fact empty.

However, disorganization aside, there was nothing that truly aroused our suspicions. The hospital was small and they told us only about 100 people were registered to vote that day. This seemed to make it reasonable -- if technically illegal -- for them to open the stations later on. A few pro-Yeltsin posters on the wall near the station were unlikely to sway voters to change their votes, and the ballot box at least sounded devoid of vote-stuffing and appeared otherwise normal.

See ELECTIONS on page 11

Although the press's choice is a far cry from being state-sponsored censorship, it is nonetheless a blow to democracy and a truly "free press."

Partners Project Gears Up for the School Year

Get involved! New teams are forming now

It's that time of the year again! School is starting for students of all ages, and the Partners in Human Rights Education Program is preparing to teach about human rights and responsibilities throughout Minnesota. Some exciting initiatives in 1996-97 have the potential to make this year the most successful to date!

Introductory Meeting

The Partners Program is still looking for volunteer teachers, lawyers, and community representatives to go into the classrooms and teach students about human rights and responsibilities. A free, introductory meeting for new participants in the Twin Cities is scheduled for Tuesday, October 1, 1996, from 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at the University of Minnesota Law School, Room 385.

Working and Action Sessions

These sessions are for both new and continuing volunteers and provide an opportunity for participants to meet their team members and prepare to go into the classroom. The cost is \$15, to cover lunch and materials. Twin Cities Sessions are scheduled for three Saturdays, September 28, October 5, and October 12. Each meeting will be from 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at the University of Minnesota Law School in the sub-plaza.

Sessions in **Greater Minnesota and North Dakota** are scheduled as follows:

- St. Cloud: Saturday, October 12, 1996 • 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. • Court House
- Grand Rapids: Saturday, October 19, 1996 • 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. • Itasca Community College
- Bemidji: Saturday, October 19, 1996 • 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. • New Library
- Worthington: Saturday, October 26, 1996 • 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. • TBA
- Fargo, North Dakota: Saturday, October 26, 1996 • 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. • TBA

For more information on how to become involved in the Partners in Human Rights Education Program, and to register for an introductory training, please call (612) 626-0041. ■

Women's Project Hosts Advocate from Hungary

Minnesota Advocates' Women's Project hosted Antonia Burrows on a two week information exchange visit in August. Burrows is the Advocacy Coordinator for the Constitutional and Legislative Policy Institute in Budapest, Hungary. She is also a volunteer with a crisis advocacy hotline in Budapest. Burrows visited with domestic violence service providers throughout the state to exchange ideas about advocacy for victims of violence and to gather information for the new women's legal rights center in Budapest.

Burrows met with advocates from the Battered Women's Justice Project, the Domestic Abuse Project, Harriet Tubman Center, the Hennepin County Service Center, Casa de Esperanza, the Sexual Violence Center and the Gay and

Lesbian Community Action Council. Burrows traveled to greater Minnesota to meet with advocates at the Winona Resource Center and the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth. She also met with Aviva Breen, Director of the Minnesota Legislative Commission on the Economic Status of Women, to discuss legislative strategies for the advancement of women.

Burrows gathered training materials for hotline advocates and volunteers in Hungary and discussed ideas and approaches to legal advocacy for women. She was able to meet with a cross section of the community of advocates in Minnesota. Burrows exchanged information and ideas and inspired the Minnesota women's advocates she met with the work her

organizations are doing for women in Budapest. ■



Volunteers Wanted:

The Women's Project is seeking volunteers for an education project on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Please call Robin Phillips at 341-3302 for more information.

Save the Date:

Please save Saturday March 8 for the **Second Annual International Women's Day Celebration**. To volunteer for the 1997 Celebration, please call Robin Phillips or Therese Gales at 341-3302. ■

Asylum Victory!

Oromo Client from Ethiopia Granted Asylum

S. is a member of the Oromo ethnic group. The Oromo are the single largest minority group in Ethiopia. After studying abroad, S. returned home to Ethiopia to set up a dentistry practice. Within two days of his return, S. was arrested by members of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). He was accused of being active in the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), detained and interrogated. With the help of his father, S. escaped to the United States. He applied for asylum in 1992.

After S. left Ethiopia, his father was arrested and detained for his involvement in the OLF. While he was in jail, he was severely beaten. He was released on bail eventually because he was near death and had to be rushed to the hospital. Once he was recovered, S.'s father fled Ethiopia to avoid being returned to detention. He joined his son, S., in Minneapolis and applied for political asylum in February of 1994. The request for asylum was granted in January of 1995 - one day after his asylum interview. On the basis of this decision, S.'s mother and his three young sisters were given derivative asylum status. They joined S. and his father in Minneapolis in January of 1996. S. was granted asylum in April of 1996.

Joseph F. Kueppers of **Kueppers, Hackel & Kueppers** represented S. and all of his family members in their asylum applications! Thanks to Joe for helping this family start a new life in the United States. Thanks also to **Scott Wright** of **Doherty, Rumble & Butler** who acted as consulting attorney.

Please note that Minnesota Advocates has extensive documentation on the treatment of OLF members and the Oromo people in Ethiopia. For more information, contact Jennifer Prestholdt at 341-3302. ■

ATTORNEYS STILL NEEDED!

The Refugee and Asylum Project urgently needs an attorney or team of attorneys to act as co-counsel in a federal declaratory judgement action.

The project also currently has a number of female clients from Liberia and Somalia who have been victims of persecution in the form of rape and sexual abuse. As it is often very difficult for these clients to talk about their experiences, our policy is to pair them with female attorneys. We are always in need of female attorneys to provide *pro bono* legal representation to these female asylum applicants.

We also need attorneys willing to work with asylum clients in deporta-

tion and exclusion proceedings. The procedure involves applying for asylum through an administrative hearing before an immigration judge. It is much more important for an asylum applicant to have an attorney at this level; often an attorney is the only thing that stands between the client and deportation to their country of origin. Generally, hearings are scheduled many months in the future, so there is a minimal initial time commitment. Attorneys who have handled affirmative asylum cases in the past, litigators, or anyone interested in gaining courtroom experience are encouraged to become involved. Contact Jennifer Prestholdt at 341-3302. ■



New Legal Fellow Joins Staff

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights welcomes the 1996-97 Legal Fellow **Loan Thi Huynh**. Loan is a 1995 graduate of the University of Houston Law Center and has been admitted the Texas bar. Loan has worked for immigration and criminal defense law firms in Texas. In addition, she has clerked for the immigration judges at the Executive Office of Immigration Review in Houston and worked on children's issues with the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law. Loan will be working on the Refugee & Asylum Project and the Death Penalty Project.

Loan has said she is thrilled with the opportunity and challenge to serve the diverse immigrant communities of Minnesota, and she is looking forward to working with our volunteer attorneys in providing assistance to victims of human rights violations. Please join Minnesota Advocates in welcoming Loan! ■

UN STATUS, continued from page 3

In the end the Chair, Sr. Fidel Coloma, of Chile, ruled that the committee had reached a consensus and granted category II status to Minnesota Advocates. Every four years, the organization will be required to submit an update of its work with ECOSOC in order to retain its status at the U.N. *Thanks to Greg Gisvold for his work in drafting the application of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights for consultative status.* ■

Minnesota Advocates Board Member Starts New Theater Company

Dipankar Mukherjee, Minnesota Advocates board member and co-creator of the production *Shadowlines*, which was featured at the 1995 Minnesota Advocates Human Rights' Awards Dinner, has started a new theatre company.

His company, Pangea World Theater, is committed to producing international works, styles and traditions that illuminate the universal human

condition, end divisiveness and celebrate differences. Pangea World Theater uses multi-national casts to celebrate a secular, cross-ethnic vision of tolerance and human rights.

Its first production, *Conference of the Birds*, metaphorically maps out the journey of the human spirit in its quest for truth. In this classic tale, the birds of the world are gathered together by their leader, the hoopoe, and told of a legendary King. The birds take flight

on a pilgrimage, but the dangers and hardships encountered on the journey cause many in the flock to abandon their search. In the end, the small number that survive realize they have completed a spiritual trek to self-discovery...the King they sought was within themselves all along.

Performances run from September 26-October 13 at the Theatre de la Jeune Lune at 7:30 p.m. Price is \$12. Call 612-333-6200 for tickets. ■

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In another station we witnessed an incident slightly more egregious. In this station, two elderly people registered but were mistakenly directed to a nearby table to vote instead of to the booths. They were partially blind and unsure what to do. A middle-aged lady at the table stepped in to help them out. The lady took their ballots from them, asked them who they were voting for (Yeltsin), marked their ballots for them and handed them back, directing them to the ballot boxes where they were to drop them in. Surprised, I immediately asked her who she was. She was a Yeltsin observer there to monitor the day's proceedings. At this point, observers for the Communist party and the Yobloko bloc, a democratic party supporting the campaign of Grigory Yavlinsky, also came over and began questioning her actions. She insisted that she had only stepped in to help, but they became irate and took their complaint to the station Commissioner, whose first response was that, well, he hadn't seen the incident! The point was eventually made, and the Yeltsin observer disciplined.

As might be expected, the prison was one of the most interesting stations to visit. The procedures just to get in the jail were lengthy, and our passport numbers and accreditation information was copied down in several places. We were questioned by the Chief Prison Warden as to the exact purpose of our visit, and why we had an interest in being election monitors at all. A two-star general conducted us to the two polling stations in the prison and wanted also to know the names of our bosses and where we worked. (We didn't tell him). We suspect they made no effort to hurry partly to buy time to make sure the voting stations looked as we would want them. We were unlikely to be shown anything truly in violation of the electoral rules. Once inside, we were reminded of Solzhenitsyn's book *The Gulag Archipelago* by the grimness of the prison, the damp-rot, the over-crowding, and the pervasive atmosphere of Controller and Controlled. There was little interest in the voting stations themselves. The one thing we did note of concern was that the prisoners had to identify themselves by name as they are not permitted to carry identification.

Although the prison wardens registering the prisoners were likely to recognize each prisoner and know each by name, the system was more susceptible to mistakes and to prisoners being able to vote under other names than their own.

At 10:00 p.m. the stations, by law, closed. My team-mate and I stayed for the vote count at one of the worst-run stations found, in a blue collar district of eastern Moscow. At this station, young army recruits had been hired as election officials and had spent the day registering voters. They were bored and restless, entertaining themselves by throwing wadded up paper at each other. The Commissioner, a woman in her mid-30's, seemed frantic and unable to control them. The ballot boxes were hidden from view behind the curtained voting booths, but the mobile ballot boxes were in a back room that had uncontrolled access and people wandering in and out. Significantly, one of the mobile ballot boxes had a broken seal giving the impression that it had been tampered with. (We were told that the box had been used in last year's parliamentary elections which was when the original was seal had been broken). Ballots were stacked in loose, uncounted piles. As the station closed, the recruits seized and dragged the ballot boxes into the back room and dumped the ballots out onto a long table, sending paper flying in the process. As they grabbed at the ballots and amassed them into piles for counting, an elderly lady at another table began slowly cutting up the unused ballots in their stacks. Within minutes, rough piles were formed from the day's 2,000-odd votes. Then activity concentrated on sifting through the piles and forming stacks for each candidate's votes, counting the piles and filling in the numbers on the Protocol that would be sent to the Territorial Commission and later reported to the Central Election Commission.

In summary, although we noted mistakes in many polling stations, there was no suggestion of political intrigue. It is significant that without exception, every observer we talked with, whether pro-Communist, pro-Yeltsin, pro-Yabloko or other, reported no significant irregularities and all fully supported the notion that the elections were free and fair. Based on my observations, I agree. ■

CALENDAR

Sunday and Monday, September 29 and 30: The Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs is hosting a two-day called, "The New Immigrants: An Analysis of Modern Immigration Trends and Policies." The conference will feature California Senator Dianne Feinstein, Rudolph Guiliani, Mayor of New York, Doris Meissner, Commissioner, U.S. INS, and Leif Pagrotsky, Principal Adviser to the Prime Minister of Sweden. Call Pam Williamson at 612-625-2055 for more information. Minnesota Advocates is also a co-sponsoring organization for this event.

Tuesday, October 8: Women Against Military Madness (WAMM) and the East Timor Action Network invite you to meet and hear Carmel Budiarto, longtime Indonesian woman rights activist. Her recently published book, "Surviving Indonesia's Gulag" is a memoir of her three years in prison in the early 70's after General Suharto's seizure of power. For a schedule of events, call Jennifer at the WAMM office at 612-827-5364.

Friday, October 18: Southwest State University's Regional Studies Program is hosting a conference on the new minorities and the food processing industry of Southwest Minnesota. The conference will feature national experts and will introduce a major new book on this topic. Call the Southwest State Rural Studies office at 507-537-6226 for more information.

The Zorongo Flamenco Dance Theatre presents *Garden of Names*, an original flamenco dance theater work based on Lawrence Thornton's award-winning novel, *Imagining Argentina*. The book is a fictionalized account of the period of the "disappeared" in Argentina during the 1970s, when people of all ages were disappeared, tortured and killed during a reign of terror by the military government. Zorongo Flamenco Theatre used a committee of experts (including Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights) in the literary, human service, and peace and social justice communities to develop this exciting and innovative new work. Call the Southern Theatre Box Office for tickets at 612-340-1725. Performances are October 3-13. Performance times are Thursday-Saturday, 8:00 p.m.; Sunday, 2:00 and 8:00 p.m. Ticket price is \$18.

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