
Trans - Himalayan Aid Society

Fall Newsletter

September 2002

40th Anniversary Special Edition



THE DALAI LAMA

MESSAGE

I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Trans-Himalayan Aid Society for the help you have given Tibetans since your foundation as the Tibetan Refugee Aid Society forty years ago. We Tibetans are passing through a very difficult period and shouldering very difficult tasks with many obstacles. But these factors do not discourage us, because our goal is just and true.

Beginning from 1959, when we first came into exile, we calculated that our struggle may take a long time and we have prepared carefully to meet that challenge. We decided that providing our children with a good education, a modern as well as our own traditional education, was a priority so that even if the struggle is prolonged, a new generation could replace the older one and take responsibility for our cause.

I am grateful to all of you for the help you have given our refugee community, particularly your direct interest in the specific needs of the various settlements, and hope we can count on your continued friendship until our goal is won.

June 7, 2002

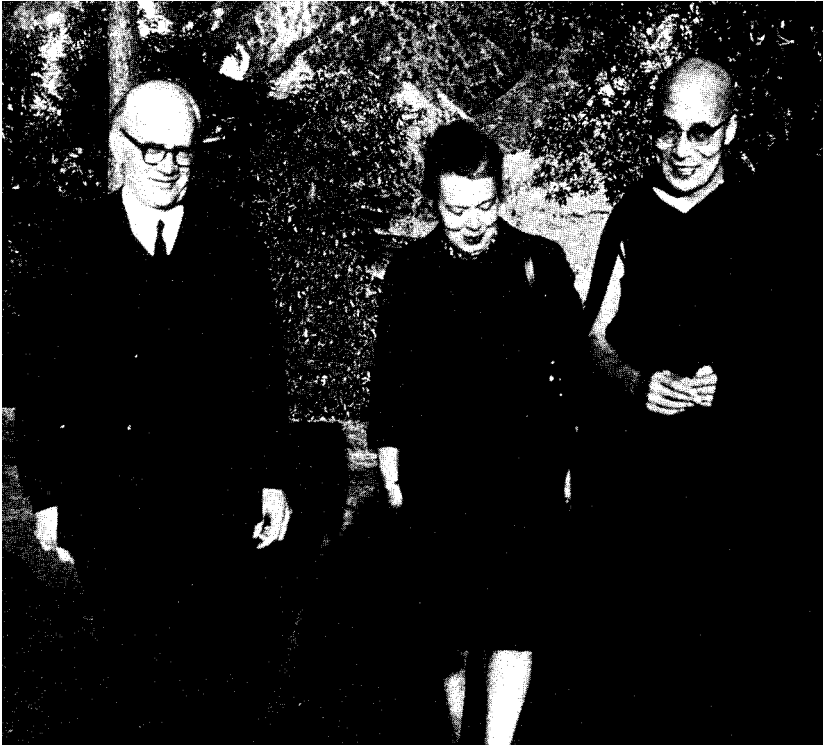


Tibetan Children Then...



...and Now

Letter from his Holiness the Dalai Lama



TRAS founders, George and Inge Woodcock with the Dalai Lama

Message From Our Patrons

Inge Woodcock and Dorothea Leach

Although TRAS is a relatively small organisation, we are so fortunate to have most generous and devoted members who not only take their commitment to the work and aims of the Society very seriously but always come through with flying colours when asked to consider an urgent request. There are so many examples of the compassion and kindness shown by TRAS members to those less fortunate living in the part of the world where our Society has chosen to work.

We, who have been honoured by being asked to be the Patrons of the Society, send our most heartfelt good wishes and congratulations to all

members. May TRAS be able with your generosity and compassion to carry on with its noble aims for years to come."

From Small Beginnings

The story of TRAS is a story not of government bureaucracy, international conferences and politics, but rather of individuals and coincidences which have led to 40 years of successful work for and with Tibetan refugees, Indian and Nepali villagers and even a few Tibetans inside Tibet.

The individuals are ordinary Canadians whose lives were suddenly touched by a sometimes tiny event or coincidence. There were no huge TV stories and nightly coverage of the dramatic fleeing of the young Dalai Lama to India in 1959, with 100,000 of his faithful people. There were no

calls on the world stage to help these people whose ancient culture, heritage and race were about to be wiped out. Few knew about the hundreds of starving orphans sleeping five to a thin mattress, with one thin blanket to keep them warm in the Himalayan winter. There were just a series of little coincidences which put a human face on the Tibetans' suffering and which led individual Canadians to devote their time and energies to helping out.

Consider some of our Directors and Presidents: Did the Woodcocks know when they went to India in 1962 that they would have the chance to meet the Dalai Lama in person and that one look at the condition of little Tibetan orphans would inspire them to spend the next many years working to better the conditions for Tibetan children?

Did the Leaches deliberately sit near John Conway at a UBC lecture, just when John was flogging Tibetan Christmas cards, inspiring the Leaches to wonder why - and start a lifetime of work for the Tibetan cause?

Did Daphne Hales know when she moved back to Vancouver in 1962, after visiting Nepal, that her next door neighbour would come running over asking for help to sort piles of

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rummage in the Woodcocks' basement?

Did Beth Whittaker and Ans Mueller, hiking in Nepal with Mike Rojik of Toronto, realise they would become long-time TRAS directors and administrators of the Nepal Schools Project?

Did Frank and Lynn Beck, spending a year as medical doctors in Nepal, know this would lead to many years of devoted work as President and Projects Director of TRAS?

Did the Canadians who bought a Tibetan rug, or raised Tibetan dogs, or respected the Buddhist religion, or saw a Tibetan movie, have any idea that this would lead them, like children following a Pied Piper, to

become generous donors and sponsors though TRAS? What on earth made Eric Brett and Mrs. Bunny leave TRAS such large bequests, and Jessie Kaye raise money first for a cow and then for pit toilets?

If we quizzed our 600 members, we would no doubt find 600 individual reasons why each of us wants to help the Tibetan cause - and from such little beginnings the Society was born and grew to have a far-reaching impact on Tibetan refugees and on many villages in the Himalayan region. It has remained a very small Society, with a very human touch - and it has been very effective!



You are cordially invited to the TRAS 40th Anniversary Celebration Dinner

to be held in Vancouver on

**Saturday, October 19, 2002
at 6:30pm**

**South Hall
8273 Ross St (at Marine Drive)**

Please join us for an evening of fellowship and entertainment.

Cost \$25.00 per person

Indo Tibetan dinner and entertainment

Grand raffle prizes include a Tibetan jacket, chair mat, thanka, Brian Harris photos, books on Nepal, Videomatica gift certificate and more!

Raffle tickets: \$2 each, 3 for \$5 or an arm's worth for \$10.

Phone the TRAS office at 604-224-5133.

A TRAS History

In this anniversary issue we look back over 40 years of TRAS history, to see where it all started and where it has led. There is still work to be done, and projects to be supported, but for now, please join us as our Patron and several past Presidents take us back over the 4 decades of TRAS. Then, if you are in Vancouver on October 19, please join us at a celebration dinner and entertainment! And even if you are not able to come, you can always buy raffle tickets for our Giant Raffle!

The First Decade (1962 - 71)

by Dorothea Leach

“Each of us must learn to work not just for his or her own self, family or nation, but for the benefit of all mankind. Universal responsibility is the real key to human survival. It is the best foundation for world peace.”

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

This was truly the principle by which George and Inge Woodcock lived all their lives. They most generously supported innumerable charities and individuals in need. George was always ready to write articles expressing his views in aid of a cause in which he believed and Inge gave so tirelessly of her time and talent for the benefit of people and diverse projects.

It was therefore not surprising that they put that principle into action after their return from India in 1962

where they had become aware of the terrible plight of the Tibetan refugees. After a chance audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and visits to camps and orphanages they saw the pressing need for help. George Woodcock's high literary profile and his connection with the media made possible the successful start of the Society and its fund raising potential. Colleagues from the University of British Columbia and friends and acquaintances in the arts circle joined George and Inge to found the Tibetan Refugee Aid Society in Vancouver. The aims of the Society were expressed in a report by George Woodcock and W. L. Holland written as an information brochure to promote and give direction to the new Society. The aims of TRAS were as follows:

- (a) to collect funds for the relief of Tibetan refugees;
- (b) to participate, either independently or in co-operation with other organisations, in active relief or rehabilitation measures for Tibetan refugees;
- (c) to collect and disseminate information regarding Tibetan refugees.

The issue of immediacy was pressing, since the conditions of the Tibetans, in a country which itself was in great need of help, were poor; of particular concern was the situation of the children, many of them orphaned. In addition to food, clothing and medical care, TRAS emphasized supporting educational develop-

ment in both Tibetan and western forms.

In their report Drs Woodcock and Holland indicate that one problem for relief efforts was the fact that the United Nations and India did not recognise the independence of Tibet and consequently the Tibetan status as refugees was ambiguous and did not officially warrant aid.

Needless to say the priority of the Society was to raise funds in order to pursue the aims it had set for itself. Within one month, funds were being raised and distributed to sponsor children, to help the hospitals and schools which were trying to cope with the influx of Tibetan children (who were fleeing the border fighting), and to buy winter clothing for 1000 children in Mussoorie and Dharamsala. By the fifth meeting, 14,000 Christmas cards had been sold!!

In its first year a total of \$11,436.61 were collected through membership fees, donations, Christmas card sales and an art show which was made possible through the close and invaluable connections of the Woodcocks with many famous artists. The largest grant that year of \$6,116.35 went to the Tibetan Homes Foundation in Mussoorie which was under the excellent guidance of a Tibetan noble woman, Mrs. Rinchen Dolma Taring. She is remembered most affectionately as Amala (mother) by thousands of Tibetans who, as children, had the good fortune to be under her care in the Homes. TRAS found in her a most trustworthy and reliable co-worker in the field, not only during her 12 years of service in the Homes but also in her retirement when she focused on the needs of the elderly



Mrs. Taring with Tibetan Homes Foundation orphans

Tibetans who had no family to look after them. 2 large houses were later purchased by TRAS in Mussoorie for Mrs. Taring to set up as 'Canada Homes' for 50 orphans.

Our fund raising methods in those early days were many and diverse. A Tibetan Fair in the Armories in Vancouver was a great success, auctions of outgrown children's clothing at private homes were held, talks and slide shows not only raised interest in the need to help Tibetan refugees but also resulted in donations to the cause. The most work-intensive effort was the participation in the Sunday fleamarket. One day a week was devoted to travel all over the lower mainland in an old VW camper to collect donations of furniture, clothing, toys, books and many other saleable items. The Woodcocks' basement was used to sort and price all these treasures and on Sunday morning at 8 am we set off to the fleamarket at a Drive-in theater. At five o'clock, over much appreciated coffee and cake at the Woodcocks' home, the money was counted and a sum of over \$200 was considered a great success. Booksales in a church basement were another actually very good source of income. Appeals in our Newsletter for special needs in



The Canadian Homes. Mussoorie

the Tibetan communities often resulted in most generous support by our members. Another lucrative income for the Society was the sale of beautiful handmade necklaces made by Inge. As a very talented potter and artist she made lovely clay beads, glazed in soft colours and strung up on leather thongs. These sold very well at the Vancouver Art Gallery. In later years, bequests from former supporters became a most appreciated form of funding.

In 1968, branches of TRAS were started in Ottawa and Victoria. Later a branch was started in Alberta; the Victoria Branch remains extremely active today. As early as 1963, TRAS asked the Canadian government to accept Tibetan refugees. This was refused, but the matter was re-addressed in 1967. The government agreed, in 1970, to bring 240 Tibetans to Canada - the number who actually were admitted over time was 250, but none were allowed to stay in BC. We remember them out at the airport, sad that they were not able to stay where TRAS would have befriended them. (Eventually some of these immigrants were able to settle in BC, thanks to efforts by the Woodcocks and Leaches, and they remain close friends of TRAS)



Miles for Millions paid for the looms

Involvement with other aid and charitable organisations enabled TRAS to benefit the work for the Tibetans. For example in 1969 TRAS received \$50,500 from the Miles for Millions and in 1970 another sum of \$12,999.50 was received from this organisation, greatly enhancing our ability to pursue larger and ever increasing numbers of projects. In 1962 TRAS supported eight fairly modest schemes most of which were granted sums in the hundreds of dollars, focusing on the immediate relief and support for children, nurseries and schools. I remember very clearly one day in 1968 when Inge Woodcock phoned, absolutely delighted, to tell us that the Canadian International Development Aid (CIDA) had accepted our application for funds and had granted TRAS a sum of \$32,500 for the establishment of a Tibetan agricultural settlement in southern India for which the Indian



Clearing land in South India

government had set aside several thousand acres of land. This was the beginning of a long relationship between CIDA and TRAS which accounted for large sums of money, usually in the form of matching grants.

Over the many years, TRAS has cooperated with and received help from many different groups and organisations, such as the Red Cross, Agricultural Aid to Developing Countries, B.C., CANSAVE Toronto, European Refugee Council, Oxfam, Save the Children, Swiss Aid to Tibetans and Sleeping Children of the World, to name but a few.

It is most gratifying for all of us members of TRAS to view the growth of our involvement in supporting people in need in India, Nepal and now also Tibet over four decades. In the beginning it was "grass roots" work which now has expanded to huge schemes which will be illustrated in the following chapters. None of this would have been possible had it not been for the compassion and generosity of spirit shown by George and Inge Woodcock who inspired us to become members of TRAS and offer in whatever form we could to support their ideals which became ours.

The Second Decade (1972 - 81)

by John Conway

By the early 1970s it became clear that the Chinese Communists' seizure of Tibet, and the resulting flight of the Dalai Lama to India, were not going to be reversed in the short run. Some more lasting solution had to be



TC Tethong leads at digging the vegetable garden.

Transit huts in the background

found for the plight of the 100,000 refugees who had crossed the Himalayas and found sanctuary in northern India. The kinds of emergency relief undertaken by voluntary agencies, such as TRAS, especially on behalf of the children, now needed to be supplemented by larger schemes. All recognised that any such plans should take advantage of the skills of these Tibetan exiles, mainly peasants and craftsmen. The short-term road building projects in the Himalayan mountains offered little or no prospects, and were in any case most unhealthy, and destructive of community life. But suitable development of agricultural resettlement schemes, along with the promotion of handicrafts, would be expensive and far beyond the resources of non-governmental agencies (NGOs) such as TRAS.

The soundest proposal was put forward by a consortium of European agencies, led by Mr. C. Brouwer of the Hague. This called on the Government of India to make available for agricultural resettlement several large tracts of unused lands near the base of the Nilgiri Hills in Karnataka State. Beginning in 1971, 20,000 Tibetan refugees were then



From straw huts to houses in the South India settlements

moved there from the north, and each family was given acreage to clear and sow with suitable crops, mainly maize.

Getting these new Tibetan communities on their feet was not easy. The warm south Indian climate, so different from the cool winds of the Tibetan plateau, caused health problems for some refugees. The land, not



The first harvest



New temples anchor communities in North, South India

previously cultivated, had to be cleared in pioneer fashion - the trees cut down, stumps uprooted, underbrush and stones removed. One community lost nearly its whole first maize crop to marauding wild elephants, and had to dig a deep ditch around the whole settlement to keep the animals out. Creating an agricultural cooperative society involved many trials and errors.



Traditional Tibetan carpet weaving



Public Health

The technical machinery, housing supplies as well as the hospital and school equipment were supplied by the NGOs as best they could, and the whole operation was overseen by the Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency (MYRADA) under the genial control of Captain Bill Davinson, based in Bangalore, who turned out to be a most competent and good friend. Each settlement was organized by a Tibetan representative appointed by the Dalai Lama. TRAS was particularly interested in the Mundgod settlement because the representative there, Mr. T.C. Tethong, was married to a Canadian, Judy Pullen, of Oakville, Ontario, who had gone to India originally as a Canadian Universities Service Overseas volunteer. She was particularly devoted in helping to set up the settlement hospital and very successfully appealed to TRAS for funding to keep it going. Her work was recognized in 1976 when she was made a member of the Order of Canada. Within a few years these settlements in south India proved to be a great success. It was notable that very soon these communities had replicated their original life in Tibet and built new Buddhist monasteries to replace those destroyed by the Chinese in



Dispensary in Tezu

their homeland. And in the winter months, traders would leave to sell sweaters in hundreds of Indian cities (trading being a traditional occupation of Tibetans), successfully adding to their incomes.

Such schemes were expensive. But luckily it was just at this time, in the early 1970s, that the Canadian government, under the inspiration of Lester Pearson, recognized the value of the expertise of Canadian voluntary agencies, and expanded the scope of the official international aid programme by offering matching grants for privately-sponsored and viable projects overseas. This combination of private initiative and public funding was enormously helpful. It mobilized TRAS and other agencies to go beyond the limited scope of short-term relief and to become involved in more long-lasting partnerships. So too the British Columbia government also set up a separate agricultural aid scheme, which TRAS was able to tap for the Tibetan settlement schemes. Another worthwhile project was the development of handcrafts workshops, especially for the ancient craft of carpet weaving. These were established in both north and south India, and soon enough found a ready market. Such schemes

were especially helpful in the Himalayan foothills and valleys where the land available for agriculture was very limited. But thanks to CIDA's funding, TRAS was able to develop a number of such small industries, along with providing schools and training programmes, and so to promote village life and prevent the dissolution of the Tibetan communities.

Such large-scale undertakings involved a greatly increased flow of funds. For instance, TRAS' gross income rose from \$206,000 in 1972 to \$485,000 in 1978/9. CIDA's matching grants in the latter year accounted for \$250,000. At the same time, private donations also increased from \$37,000 in 1973/4 to more than \$165,000 in 1978/9. Particularly gratifying in 1979 was the totally unexpected and very generous donation by Mr. Eric Brett, a retired small-holder from Surrey, B.C., of a lump sum of \$100,000 for vocational training schemes for young Tibetans and Indians in their home communities. This special fund was of great benefit for many years. (It is now amalgamated with general TRAS funds, but continues to pay for many vocational training projects every year.)

But inevitably such expansion of overseas projects and funding necessitated re-thinking how TRAS operated. The initial resolve to give every penny to refugee relief, to avoid any overhead expenses, and to operate purely on a volunteer basis, had to give way to a more professional approach. By the end of the decade, the need for office space and paid part-time staff was recognized.



President John Conway inspects machinery workshop

In addition, it was clear that such programmes required more constant contact between Canada and our Tibetan partners. So a series of visits to India by members of the TRAS Board of Directors took place which kept open the lines of communication, and made us aware of problems or delays which needed to be dealt with. Luckily throughout these years, the basis of mutual trust already established meant that the vast majority of projects was efficiently carried out, to everyone's satisfaction.

The success of this partnership, in fact, led to requests being made to TRAS to expand its horizons and to take on new projects not related solely to Tibetan refugees. The first of these involved the building of schools and the supplying of piped drinking water to a number of villages in remote eastern Nepal. This project was organized by a Toronto photog-



A new school in Nepal

rapher, Mr. Michael Rojik, who spent six months of the year in Nepal, and was very successful. Even more of a diversification was the proposal of July 1979 that TRAS should become involved with relief schemes for the Indochina Boat People. As a society founded to help Asian refugees, TRAS members naturally had great sympathy for these other victims of Communist oppression. But, after an inspection visit to Thailand's refugee camps in late 1980, it was clear that the kind of rehabilitation schemes TRAS had pioneered in India were not going to be possible. So the money raised for the boat people went to help their resettlement in Canada.

These diverse projects, and the question of the future direction of the Society's operations, led to divisions within the TRAS Board of Directors. Some members felt that the Tibetan work was more or less complete, that the cause was no longer politically correct, and that a newer focus and direction was now needed. Others, however, stressed their desire to maintain the Society's original purpose, to support the on-going requirements of Tibetan children and old people, and to undertake, if possible, humanitarian projects in Tibet itself. All were in agreement that the goodwill built up by the Society in Canada and the excellent partnerships forged in India and Nepal should not be wasted. In 1981 there were several resignations from the Board, and at the end of the year a new slate of officers for the Society. Eventually a compromise solution on future planning was reached. For the first time, there was talk of a change of name for the Society to reflect the new reality.

The highlight of the decade was undoubtedly the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Vancouver in October 1980. TRAS members participated extensively in the preparations, having to cope with the horrendous security problems involved. But His Holiness' lecture to the Vancouver Institute on the UBC campus brought out an enthusiastic audience of over 2000 people and was greatly appreciated. Subsequently a private meeting between His Holiness and the TRAS Board of Directors was a great encouragement for our work.

The Third Decade (1982 - 91)

by Daphne Hales

First the 'housekeeping' changes: the new Board of Directors formed committees to spread the considerable work load. This was unweildy in some ways, and the Directors took time to adjust, but it did ensure that we were all involved, and it lessened the tremendous load that the previous President, John Conway, had had to carry. At the same time, with the UBC Department of Finance reluc-



Restocking tank with prawn seed, after cyclone

tantly withdrawing its volunteer help and facilities, and with more than half a million dollars being put through the books annually, the Board decided that an office and part-time secretary-bookkeeper were necessary. This was paid for by the 5% which CIDA now allowed the Society for administration. TRAS is grateful to UBC for the help given over 20 years.

As the Society moved on from the large Tibetan settlements in south India, which were becoming more self reliant, it was able to reach out to neighbouring Indian villages and groups. One very large and highly successful project was the creation of a settlement for tribal people at Huthur, which TRAS and CIDA sponsored for several years.

Gradually TRAS began to help Indian projects far removed from the Tibetan areas. In 1981 CIDA sent projects to TRAS (showing once more its trust in the Society) and others were received via the Central Relief Committee (CRC) of India. When the Tibetans first settled in India, thanks to the generosity of that country, the CRC was set up by the Indian Government to handle all funds from abroad for refugees. By the mid 80s, TRAS was able, through Sri Krishnaswami of the CRC, to help with a variety of Indian projects - among them cyclone relief, renovating a damaged fishery, Ludhiana Centre for the Blind, handicraft work in Sikkim, health worker, nurse and mechanic training, rural workers training in Rajasthan, basket weaving in Navavikas, and a large agricultural rehabilitation program at a leprosy hospital in Karnataka State.



Weaving instruction for the blind



Production of silk cocoons at leprosy hospital



Clean water!



Tailoring training

However, the Tibetans were not forgotten. There was constant maintenance to do in the large settlements in the south and the smaller ones in the north. Irrigation, toilets, weaving looms, an ambulance, extra classrooms, hospital additions - there was a multitude of small projects to help the settlements function well. The vocational training project, using Mr. Brett's incredible donation and his even larger legacy, was in full swing, with groups of carpenters, tailors, mechanics, nurses, teachers, and community health workers all being trained to help in their own Tibetan settlements. And there were still pockets of Tibetans who had received no help at all or who suddenly needed our assistance. A housing project was paid for in Simla, for Tibetans who had been homeless for 20 years. The Herbertpur Settlement for Tibetan veterans of the Indian Army was supported, and housing was built in remote Miao for a group of Tibetans in the sensitive, restricted border area. 1,500 Tibetans were deported from Bhutan during the 80s, and TRAS was involved in building houses for them in Dekyiling settlement, near Rajpur. A huge long-term project in the restricted area of Meghalaya helped the Tibetan community there.



Tibetan refugees from Bhutan arrive in Dekyiling

By 1984 - 85, ideas were swirling, as TRAS was urged to take on a new direction. A trekking personnel training project had started in Nepal, under the enthusiastic leadership of Mike Cheney, and Tibetan medical training was doing well in Ladakh. The Society had by now helped build many schools and clinics in Nepal, before Mike Rojik was able successfully to create his own NGO. TRAS's path seemed definitely to be leading to the Himalayan region. Nowhere was there more danger of an enormous environmental disaster than in the Himalayan region and in the heavily populated flood plains of the great rivers fed by its snows. Maurice Strong, a well-known environmentalist, stressed that TRAS had the potential to become a major organization for the support of aid projects in the Himalayan region. At the same time, CIDA became interested in forestry and environmental conservation in Nepal. An invitation from CIDA for Dr. Barry Leach to attend the ICIMOD Conference (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development) in Nepal to discuss the future of Nepal's parks led to a proposal by Barry that TRAS should set up, in cooperation with a local NGO, a conservation and integrated development training centre in



From tent city to decent housing

the Kangra Valley in northern India. Bill Davinson of MYRADA was a keen supporter and was to scout out a possible location - but sadly and unexpectedly he died. The following year, Dr. Tony Phillips, a TRAS Director, went to visit the location, but decided, with expert help, that it was too steep, rainy and wild for our purposes. TRAS had also decided that it was too small a society to venture into the huge scheme which Mr. Strong envisaged.

However, Tony Phillip's visit to India resulted in many new suggestions which collectively would add up to the same idea of conservation of the fragile Himalayan ecosystem and grass roots aid to primitive villages in the area, presently receiving no help. A survey done for TRAS led the Society to concentrate on the northern part of Uttar Pradesh, an incredibly impoverished and environmentally degraded region. At the same time, the King Mahendra Trust for Conservation in Nepal asked for help. The outcome was three large projects, two of which were to become the main thrust of TRAS' work well into the next decade. The two in India were run by dedicated Indians doing a tremendous job for about 50 villages each: the Vanguard for Peace Onkarnath Project, run by the

doughty retired General Uban, and the Central Himalayan Integrated Rural Action Group led by Kanai Lall, a retired Indian businessman. In both cases, the vision was to reach the people through badly needed basic health care and then move on to integrated rural development. For Onkarnath, TRAS trained many health workers for the 50 small out-post clinics, and for CHIRAG, which had already started health work with funding from CIVA, a second Vancouver society founded by the Woodcocks, a village tree nursery project brought excellent results in



CHIRAG village tree nurseries



CHIRAG -guarding the new forest growth



Ladakh - solar heating for weaving workshop

reforesting the village forests. In Nepal, a lodge operators' training was done, through the Anapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), under the King Mahendra Trust, to help local people take advantage of the growing trekking trade while preserving their precious environment. And in Ladakh, TRAS funded projects to bring alternative energy to an area devoid of trees, with passive solar power being most successful.

1986 brought the sad news of the passing of Dr. Norman MacKenzie, our Honorary President, but TRAS was delighted that George and Inge Woodcock agreed to become TRAS' Patrons, as committed as ever, but with just enough scepticism in their judgements to keep us on track!

1986 also brought the exciting first talk of aid being allowed into Tibet itself, which culminated in the funding, in 1988, of a health post, daycare centre and shower building for Tibetans in Shigatse. The Tibet Development Fund was set up by Beijing to handle donations, and the work was overseen for TRAS by the Swiss Red Cross. In 1988 TRAS learned that another valuable friend had suddenly died - Mike Cheney in Nepal, through whose efforts TRAS had trained over 100 trekking guides and cooks.

In 1989, His Holiness the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which delighted us all and which made us more determined than ever to carry on working for his aims of preparing his people for a peaceful solution to the Tibetan problem.

And finally, after years of talk, determined to keep the acronym of TRAS, which was well known in India, and in order to reflect the fact that TRAS was now helping many ethnic groups in the Himalayan region as well as the Tibetans, the Society moved towards changing its name to the TRANS HIMALAYAN AID SOCIETY. It was made official in 1992.



TLC for "Tiblets" in Shigatse creche

The Fourth Decade (1992 -2002)

with notes from Joan Ford and Frank Beck

The decade started with the Society's work forging ahead with ACAP in Nepal and CHIRAG in northern India. Multi-faceted integrated rural development in both areas took the form of tree nurseries, forest conservation, kitchen gardens for healthier

diets, mother and child health, women's empowerment through literacy and village committees, income generation and alternative forms of energy. These were large, long term projects, well supported by CIDA. The Snow Lion Foundation in Nepal, dealing with Tibetan refugees there, became another excellent partner, and TRAS helped build a dam for irrigation, set up maternal and child care units and supplied library books to the high school. The remote farming community of Chushul in Ladakh was helped in many innovative ways, while solar box cookers were introduced to the Tibetan settlements and local people near Leh. The Tibetan Government-in-Exile asked for and received help for hundreds of young people who had recently fled Tibet - the Bir New School was built to accommodate these older students. This Government-in-Exile was digging itself in for the long haul, training many men and women in administration and management, and producing a Five Year Plan. Sometimes it seemed that one department did not know what another had decided, but they were on the right track, and TRAS was able to select projects within its range of expertise and finances.

After a period during which the Chinese cancelled aid to Tibet, the policy changed in 1992, and TRAS was able finally to support a small English school for Tibetans in Lhasa to help them find work in the growing tourist trade. A bigger project was the three-year training in traditional Tibetan medicine in Pelshong. The doctors, once trained, each went back to their own village to work. TRAS was able to work once again

with the Swiss Red Cross in setting up a school for nomad children in Shigatse. By 1998, a kindergarten had opened for Tibetan children in the Lhasa school, and this continues to be supported by TRAS.

On the 'people' front, there were many changes. The couple who had done the most for Tibetan children in India, the Tarings, retired and devoted themselves to looking after the elderly. Mr. Taring died in 1991 and Mrs. Taring died in 2000; luckily we had had the good fortune to meet her in 1998 when she visited relatives in Canada. 1995 was the saddest year for TRAS - we lost our founder, George Woodcock, in January, and in July Dr. Barry Leach died, leaving us bereft of his untiring energy and enthusiasm. In 1999 Dorothea Leach, who had helped from the beginning, regretfully retired, but has graciously stayed on as a Patron. There was good news too - Dr. Joan Ford received the Order of Canada for her work on many fronts, including TRAS, and on a regular basis we began to hear of former sponsored children now taking the reins in looking after the next generation of Tibetans in India and Nepal - a satisfying outcome to the ongoing sponsorship project.



English school in Lhasa



Barry and Dorothea Leach with Bill Davinson

They are teachers, school principals, nurses, thanka painting teachers and settlement officers.

From the beginning of the decade, TRAS decided to fund more projects on its own, without help from CIDA. This allowed the Society to continue to look after the smaller projects which CIDA would no longer sponsor. They were small but worthwhile, often making a difference in a community far beyond their financial value. Classrooms and workshops were built, allowing hundreds more to get schooling and training; a day-care centre gives 'Tiblets' a safe, healthy start; flood and erosion damages were repaired, saving existing buildings from major damage; the English School in Lhasa was supported; teachers and housemothers in the remote Spiti Valley were trained, allowing a school to expand for children who otherwise had no hope of an education - now they are studying computer use on the TRAS-paid computer! Homes and rooms have been built and maintained for the elderly Tibetans, who had no ancestral village to look after them, and for the retired nuns in south India, who had kindly taken in Tibetan orphans in the early days. Vocational training projects in nursing, teaching, community health, Tibetan arts, carpentry,

tailoring and computers have given many Tibetan and Indian youth a viable future.

Some of the trainings for Indian students are organized by Sister Victorine in south India - she has been a mini-Mother Teresa to many Tibetan orphans and poor village children, and TRAS continues to support her work - she can get more out of a dollar than anyone we know!

TRAS undertook 121 projects in its first 30 years - and has completed more than that number in the past 10 years! Many were the small projects, but the number of larger partners we work with has grown. In 1994 TRAS partnered with SHARE, an Indian NGO in the Kullu Valley, to build latrines in several extremely poor hill villages. TRAS is now supporting Phase 3 of a most successful effort to reduce disease and clean the water and land. A large immunization component has been added. Tibetan nuns, escaping the imprisonment and torture which was their lot in Tibet, were encouraged by the Dalai Lama to learn subjects hitherto only available to monks, and to prepare themselves to work in the community. The Tibetan Nuns' Project was one of TRAS' major efforts in 1994 and 95. In 1995 TRAS began working with the Buddha Memorial Children's Home in Kathmandu, discovering that the Principal had himself been sponsored by TRAS as a child! The Society has built workshops, funded several vocational training schemes and sponsors many children, who are brought from impoverished families in the hinterland or picked up from the dangerous streets of the city. 1996 saw TRAS undertake a large



Sister Victorine and her Tibetan students

project with Appropriate Agricultural Alternatives near Kathmandu, to help farmers learn better methods of growing organic, nutritious vegetables and marketing them. And in 1998 TRAS helped the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics turn its one computer printing outfit into a well-equipped computer desk top publishing training course which is in huge demand, and has already trained 12 or more batches of very employable Tibetans. The long-time partner of TRAS, the Department of Education in the Dalai Lama's Government in Exile, has organized large-scale vocational trainings funded by TRAS and CIDA in the traditional fields of community health and Tibetan arts, and also in such up-to-date ventures as auto mechanics, TV repair women, hotel management and fashion design! All the trainees are currently employed and self supporting.

In Canada, TRAS has not stood still. A new constitution followed the change of name. A coloured brochure was produced. The office was computerized at CIDA's insistence (this has not cut down on the amount of paper used!), and first faxes, then emails made corresponding with our partners in India and Nepal startlingly easier. A TRAS website is up and



Young Canadians meet Nepalese mothers' group

running. Two T-shirts have been designed and sold out; direct Christmas appeals have been well supported. And TRAS has looked to the next generation of young Canadians to teach them the value and satisfaction of volunteering with an organization which helps the developing world. Two Nepal study tours, with 8 Canadian teenagers on each, have gone to study ACAP projects. The participants have given many slide presentations on their return and have helped TRAS in numerous ways. TRAS Directors, too, continue to give many talks and slide shows, and are in touch with local like-minded groups - CIVA, Canada Tibet Committee, Students Working for a Free Tibet, SEVA and the Brian Harris 'Tibetan Voices' project, Women Working for Tibet and the Tibetan Cultural Society.

To sum up, here are two examples of the difference TRAS has helped to make:

- A Director visited the south Indian Tibetan settlement at Mundgod in the early days and saw one bicycle in the huge area. On a second visit several years later there were bicycles everywhere, and the State Bank of



Spiti trainee teachers lend a hand building the new school

Current Projects



Old people, Mundgod



SHARE - typical Kullu Valley village...



...with new fangled latrines!



Vocational training at Buddha Memorial Home



Vegetables bring improved nutrition to ACAP village



Pre-primary teachers practise English sentences



Computer skills for nuns...



...and lay Tibetans

India had asked if it could open a branch right in the settlement.

- Directors visited ACAP villages at the start of the development project and said after a later visit, “Seeing the same villages in the very early stages of development and then five years later was truly inspiring”. The villages were clean and well run, the people healthier and more vigorous. The forests were growing back. The women were playing an important role and the community spirit was strong.

There is no doubt about it - vocational training and rural, sustainable development work! TRAS will continue its grass-roots efforts in these areas if you will help us to do so!

The Barry Leach Memorial Fund

Those of you who generously gave donations to the fund in memory of Dr. Barry Leach, long-time TRAS Director and President, will be happy to know that finally the Fund is com-

plete and a project has been selected which would have been very dear to Barry’s heart. Past Director Ty Danlock, whose beautiful artwork has adorned TRAS T-shirts, asked that the proceeds from the sale of the T-shirts be placed in the Fund. The last T-shirt is sold, and the money is about to be spent!

We had looked for an environmental project to aid a Tibetan settlement but nothing promising had been forthcoming. However, recently a project request was received from our partners at SHARE in the Kullu Valley, where TRAS is undertaking a Health and Sanitation project in several villages. (See April 2002 Newsletter). Ren Madan, the Director of SHARE, wants to start an environmental training project in selected villages and schools which are already receptive to SHARE’s work in sanitation and immunization, and in certain government and public institutions.

This pioneer group would then spearhead environmental protection campaigns in the wider area. The SHARE staff live and work in the selected villages, so long-term training and vigilance is possible.

The first activities would be:

- introduction of composting, using worms, to 120 families
- introduction of eco-friendly practices in three villages which will be used as models
- Eco Clubs started in 5 schools
- eco-friendly practices started in 2 public institutions such as the Mountaineering Institute and a para-military organization
- an advertizing campaign
- involvement of the elderly in cleaning up the environment around them, and a garbage collection system.

This all sounds like a clone of the environmental project Barry himself oversaw 9 years ago, with the blessing of the Dalai Lama, for Tibetan communities. Monks and nuns were trained in eco-friendly practices and then returned to their settlements to clean them up. Teachers’ workshops were held to help teachers to start up Nature Clubs in the Tibetan schools. Nature books were bought for the libraries. The emphasis was on training the children at an early age to look after their world. Dorothea



Save the Earth Nature Club at work

Leach is delighted to think that, in keeping with the Society's policy, we now have a chance to pass on to Indian villages the eco-friendly principles which Barry wanted taught to the Tibetan community. Also, there are Tibetan settlements in the Kullu Valley and a shanty town where hundreds of Tibetan traders live. They can benefit too! We will keep you informed of progress. Many thanks to all who contributed to the Fund.

In Case You Count the Cost

Just in case you are wondering whether this enlarged newsletter and the celebration dinner will take away funds from Tibetan projects - let us hasten to reassure you! The dinner will be self-supporting, the raffle should raise funds for future projects, and as for this newsletter - you may have noticed we did not have a summer issue this year, saving up to do one large one now on the 40 years of TRAS history

TRAS and CIDA - a Successful Partnership

It is interesting to read the TRAS Minutes from the past 40 years and to see how our relationship with CIDA has evolved. In The First Decade, Dorothea Leach mentions the excitement felt when the first CIDA grant was received, and in The Second Decade, John Conway explains how helpful CIDA was in funding the large south India Tibetan settlements.

When the concept of giving Canadian government aid through Canadian NGOs was first proposed, there were no ceilings and few guidelines. TRAS asked for funds - and funds were soon forthcoming. In the next several years, it is clear that TRAS would vet the project proposals and approve them, knowing full well that CIDA funding would come! And it did, in ever larger amounts, the biggest being just over \$300,000 a year. The level of trust in both directions was justified by the work accomplished.

Gradually, and sensibly, regulations became more stringent - TRAS had to raise one quarter of the needed money for a project. A few years later, TRAS was given an annual figure beyond which CIDA could not go. It grew to \$300,000 in 1981, 1982 and 1983 before government cutbacks led to a decrease in CIDA funding to \$250,000 in 1985 and to a horrifyingly low \$110,000 in 1992, thanks in part to an evaluation of TRAS by an outside group which considered our work to be solely

relief and our reliance on a volunteer Board of Directors to be shaky! Although TRAS heartily disagreed with many of the statements in the evaluation, there were some lessons to be learned. CIDA strongly advised TRAS to computerize all records, to send in more detailed reports and to put in place a long-term fundraising plan. Since then, various fundraising schemes have been tried, the most successful being the straight appeals for donations in recent December newsletters. Nothing, however, has matched the early fundraising successes of the Woodcocks.

In 1992, CIDA would still match TRAS funds for specific projects on a 3:1 basis, but overall, CIDA would only match on a 1:1 basis the TRAS income for that year. It was this second matching that determined the TRAS ceiling from CIDA. By 1995, CIDA had changed its matching grant ratio from 3:1 down to 2:1.

Until 1992, all CIDA's work was done from Ottawa, and each NGO was considered on its own merits. Suddenly a scary concept was introduced - CIDA would be decentralized; an agency in BC would receive a set amount from Ottawa for the NGOs and a local committee would decide how much of this pot each NGO in BC would receive, again based on project merit. Rather than each agency having its own ceiling, there was one lump sum for BC, and who knew if it would add up to what we had collectively received previ-

ously. Luckily for our work, every TRAS project submitted to this committee was approved!

However, by 1995, CIDA once again centralized its NGO work, and again we have a project officer in Ottawa - Linda Libront, who has been extremely active in helping TRAS prepare project proposals. In the early days, a two-page handwritten request was enough - now a 15-page computer document, a detailed Results Based Management grid, an environmental assessment, compliance with CIDA's latest guidelines for women, education, basic health etc, and a detailed budget as well as a payment and reporting schedule are required. The length of time to process the requests has grown enormously, with approval taking months to receive.

The latest change in CIDA funding is that CIDA will not contemplate projects which are less than \$75,000 (\$50,000 coming from CIDA). This is a far cry from the days when TRAS received a lump sum of \$20,000 from CIDA to use for a variety of small projects.

The outcome of all these purse-tightenings is that TRAS relies much more heavily on supporting projects through TRAS-only funds. This has led to a dipping into our capital fund, when worthwhile projects cost more than the donations we receive, with a subsequent decrease in investment income (added to the already low interest rates).

Your tax dollars are not being dealt out willy nilly by CIDA! But the TRAS record of every project being accepted still stands. We are proud of this, and of our relationship with

CIDA, through which we have learned much and because of which we have been able to channel millions of dollars to successful projects in India, Nepal and Tibet.

What was it like for the Children?

The following is an extract from a letter written by Judy Tethong (Pullen) in 1964, when she and Lois James worked as CUSO volunteers among the Tibetan refugees at Kangra and Dharamsala, on projects for which TRAS was sending funds:

"Mr. Kundeling (Dalai Lama's Director of Education) got word that 120 desperately ill children were arriving from Nepal. On Monday he called Lois and asked her to come to Dharamsala with medicines, clothes, etc, to receive the children and stay on to nurse them until they were well enough to move on to other schools. He moved his office to Mortimer Hall and they worked like beavers to get his old office building ready for the children. They built a temporary kitchen on the verandah, dug latrine ditches, collected blankets and rations from the other schools.

At 3pm Wednesday, 3 busses arrived with the children. Nearly all had to be carried bodily off the busses and up to the house. Mr. Kundeling was on the verandah as the first bodies were carried in and he cried when he saw their condition....they were all starved to such a degree that their stomachs could not handle food. For three days and two nights Lois got almost no sleep...There were 13 critically ill cases, but all the children were very

sick. One boy had 30 bowel movements in an hour! All had diarrhoea. They had to give intravenous, blood transfusions, and the works.

Mr. Kundeling and all his office people and assistants worked like slaves. He was scrubbing children clean, clearing up messes, cleaning eyes. His Lama assistant was out digging the latrine....

On the 14th day Lois had a wild jeep ride to Kangra, but the 8 year old girl died in her arms minutes before they reached the hospital. She was riddled with worms which had starved while she starved. As soon as she got food, the worms all over her body became active and caused convulsions. Those in her brain finally caused her death. Lois had to bring the body back to Dharamsala and cremate it in a lonely spot on the mountainside, a ghastly experience and yet she kept working tirelessly. Another little boy never regained consciousness after he got



to the hospital - he died a few days later. Almost worse were the emotional disturbances. I've never seen anything as heartbreaking as those kids just lying or sitting listlessly and staring straight ahead with pathetic and frightened looks. When they walked, they stumbled and shuffled... seldom have I seen such skeletons.

The next day another child was rushed to hospital - 8 year old Karma who was living a constant nightmare. For days he screamed that dogs were eating him. His frail little fists beat the air or clawed at his body to push the imaginary attackers away. He screamed if anyone came near and would scramble under the bed and clutch his head in his arms as he cowered in a little heap on the floor, sobbing that the Chinese were after him. He is an orphan, as are most of the children in this group of 116. With sedation and treatment he gradually calmed down, but is still very withdrawn. Lois has many children with similar disturbances and one bigger boy tried to strangle himself with a belt. 7 year old Seechew Lhamo, a tiny scrap of a girl, withdrew completely and wouldn't talk or smile or respond to anyone or anything. She ate very little and had no control over her bowels or her bladder. She was finally released from hospital. Lois had quite a time with her, but was very firm when she started throwing temper tantrums. Last week I was up at the Retreat and I nearly fainted when Seechew came tearing up to greet me with a laugh and a hug. All the children have made amazing recoveries with Lois' nursing, but most important, with the tender, loving care she's showered on them. It's a miracle that she lost only

the two - at first people said she'd be lucky if 20 survived. She became obsessed with the fact that she wouldn't lose any more, and worked tirelessly.

I forgot to tell you where these sick children came from. They've been in Nepal several years but conditions there were pretty bad. They marched to the border with the two older men who had been trying to care for them in Nepal. But they were refused permission to enter India. So there they sat on the border for four months without shelter of any kind, food or medical attention. The blistering heat nearly finished them. Tibetans from Dharamsala kept trying to get them across the border, but with no luck. Finally, two men snuck across, took pictures and dashed to the External Affairs Ministry in Delhi. The pictures must have been pretty shocking because entry permits were issued immediately on grounds of compassion. The two men got back to find the children burying two who had just died. Ten died during the wait there. The two men looking after them weren't allowed into India (they've come since) so the two from Dharamsala had to struggle alone. 17 children were left in a hospital on this side of the border. They weren't allowed to come any further. Seven of them died and the survivors arrived here last week ...the long, hot train ride and then the bus ride over twisty mountain roads was ghastly for the children. Those poor men had to push, shove and carry them whenever they changed trains. In order to get places for them on the trains, the men would carry some into the railway official's office — as soon as the officials saw the desperate condition

the children were in, they'd dash about to find a place for them. It was all pretty grim and miserable."

Forty years later, TRAS thankfully does not see such pitiful scenes - but poverty and the lack of medical treatment and education still plague far too many children in the Himalayas. And then there are the vocational training projects to help them become self sufficient. Our work is not done yet!

In Memory by Marion Tipple

Galen Rowell, whose legendary photograph of the Rainbow over the Potala is well known, was tragically killed in a plane crash on August 11. Galen's photographs have vividly brought Tibet into the homes of many. In 1990, he wrote the introduction, illustrated and published through his company, Mountain Light, the Dalai Lama's book "My Tibet". Through his photographs, articles and the lectures which he gave around the world, he had consistently promoted Tibet's plight, and will be sadly missed by the Tibetan community and all those involved with the Tibetan cause.

**Thank you to all
our members.
TRAS would not
exist without
your support.**

Sponsorship Report

by Joan Ford

Buddha Memorial Children's Home flooded with pleas to take children because of troubles in Nepal - can you help?

This month, our case histories are from the Buddha Memorial Children's Home in Kathmandu, Nepal. I have just received a letter from the Principal, Dorje Namgyal. He tells me that the political problems have not directly affected the school, but indirectly the lack of tourists has resulted in a drop in donations, and a flood of villagers coming to Kathmandu for safety and the hope of work, which has resulted in many requests for him to take in children. Please consider sponsoring one of these innocent victims of political strife.

Dorje is working to have the school capable of teaching Grades 11 and 12 by 2004. At present, very few can afford to take these grades; it costs about \$750 p.a. He has 5 children taking these grades now, and next year would like to have 9. If anybody reading this would like to educate a child, please contact the TRAS office. Such an education would open up great opportunities for the child's future. Thank you!

Tenzin Dolma 'B': "This 7 year old girl has one younger sister and an elder brother. The family originally came from Tibet. Later they came to Rasuwa in Nepal near the Tibetan border and stayed on there. The family is extremely poor. Having no land of their own, they work at others' fields. Sometimes, the father carries loads for the trekkers. This year the

father came down to Kathmandu with two of his children on a pilgrimage. He tried to put them in school, but failed, as no school was ready to keep them on a free scholarship. Finally Tenzin was brought to this school with much expectation. Seeing the difficulties, we have taken the child into the school and now look for a sponsor."

Tashi Gurung: "This 12 year old boy comes from a very poor family of Mustang district. He has 2 elder sisters and 2 younger sisters. They are shepherds in the village, and sometimes they work at others' fields and earn their living in this way. His parents are finding it very difficult to feed their children. None of his sisters ever got a chance to go to school. Therefore, his parents wish that at

least one of their children has an opportunity to go to school. Seeing the difficult situation, one of his aunts brought Tashi here and requested educational help. We have admitted him. He looks clever and eager to go to school. Now we are looking for a sponsor." (If someone is interested to learn more about Mustang, please ask the TRAS office for back issues of the Newsletter dealing with Mustang)

The TRAS Credo

There are four parts to it:

- never impose projects on others, but consider carefully what they ask for. They will know best what their communities need.
- never send staff to work overseas. There is plenty of knowledgeable talent available locally, and it stimulates the economy to 'buy local'.
- keep the administrative costs to a bare minimum.
- to achieve this, all Directors, who are all volunteers, will work long hours not only at decision making, but also at displays, public lectures, slide shows, and craft sales. Each Director will administer several projects from beginning to end, and Directors will run the sponsorship program and newsletter.

Few Directors have been named in this newsletter - those who have are representative of the many hard working Canadians who have run TRAS for 40 years.

TRANS HIMALAYAN AID SOCIETY

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Trans - Himalayan Aid Society (TRAS)

Yearly Membership donation (**\$20**) **\$20**

Possible Additional Donations:

Annual Donation of **\$300** for the "Child Development and Education Project"
 at a residential school or in a settlement.

Donation to the Old People's Fund, which supports a "Self-Help Project"
 for the elderly and infirm.

Donation to the general fund or other specific area of your choice

TOTAL\$ _____

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