



## National Convention, a Delegate's View

The Ridván days are the most festive of the Bahá'í year. Peculiar then, perhaps, that National Convention, which falls within the 12 days of Ridván, rarely feels like a festive occasion. It does not often feature the kind of inspirational and artistic contributions that are enjoyed at other national events. This year's Convention however, held in Llandudno on the 27-29 April, left its delegates with a clarity of vision, a regenerated enthusiasm, a spiritual upliftment and a fresh sense of commitment, equal to the outcome of any inspirational meeting.

There was much to be happy about, not least the fact that there is a strongly felt unity of understanding about the pressing needs of our time and the processes we must engage in as we embark on the Five Year Plan, the first of the Fifth Epoch of the Formative Age. The representative of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Europe, Mr Shahriar Razavi, reemphasised this time and again throughout his elucidations during the weekend. Referring to the most recent guidance of the Universal House of Justice, the Counsellor highlighted this 'new state of mind', this 'coherence of understanding', this 'moment of consciousness' which the Bahá'í World has universally reached. It would appear that rarely in our history have we experienced such a common, worldwide understanding of the processes which are necessary to further growth and consolidation.



*Elsie and Joan Bowers at the Association of Bahá'í Women UK stall.*

The consultations centred around very clear direction from the Universal House of Justice, as presented to us by Mr Razavi. The process of entry by troops is well underway but it must now be accelerated. Training Institutes are the engine which power the process. We in this country, the Counsellor told Convention, do not have a problem with numerical growth. We have experienced it in a number of places over the past thirty years when a concerted effort has been made to reach people in a focussed way. However our challenge is not only to initiate the process but sustain it. Previously there was no formal machinery in place whereby the capacities of believers could be developed, their devotion strengthened, their teaching potential immediately cultivated. This, the Training Institutes

provide. The Universal House of Justice has called for three areas of activity to become open to people everywhere. Children's classes, devotional meetings and Study Circles are all features of community life which can and must involve the wider population to whom Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings are directed.

The common vision of the delegates was demonstrated in the almost universal acceptance, or rejection, of the various resolutions proposed. Much detail of the Five Year Plan is still to be worked out by the National Spiritual Assembly and the Regional Bahá'í Councils, but the clarity of thinking, the commitment and dedication of the delegates to the Plan's overarching themes was evident.

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*Friends from Northern Ireland*

The primary purpose of the National Convention is, of course, the election of the National Spiritual Assembly. An aura of spiritual calm descended as the delegates carried out their sacred duty at noon on the Saturday. The result was greeted with a wave of affection, gratitude and expressions of loyalty to the incoming Assembly. The Counsellor's spontaneous embrace of each of the newly elected members was a touching and potent demonstration of the essential loving collaboration which exists between the two arms of the Administrative Order.

The members elected were (in alphabetical order) Rita Bartlett, Trevor Finch, Peter Hulme, Barney Leith, Kishan Manocha, Wendi Momen, Iain Palin, John Parris, and Shirin Tahzib. The National Spiritual Assembly later informed Convention of the result of its election of officers - Shirin Tahzib - Chair; Iain Palin - Vice-Chair; Barney Leith - Secretary; Kishan Manocha - Assistant Secretary; Wendi Momen - Treasurer.

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*Ken Finn entertaining the children.*

Another touching moment of Convention came with the reading of the Roll of Honour - names of those believers who have passed away during the last year - amongst them, souls whose contribution to the history of the UK Bahá'í community will be long remembered and celebrated by future generations. The delegates were also moved when reminded that this year sees the fiftieth anniversary of the two-year Africa Campaign in which the British community played such a pivotal role. Consultations around the recent boundary changes and the proliferation of isolated believers brought forth inspiring stories from delegates whose services to the Cause have led them in previous years to experience intense hardship and isolation. These friends also recounted the blessing of such life-changing events which strengthened their faith.

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*The Junior Youth class.*

As the delegates wended their way home from Llandudno, a rainbow appeared high above the main transport routes out of North Wales, a poignant and timely reminder of the National Spiritual Assembly's rainbow concept where each and every believer has a unique and valid part to play in the unfoldment of the Divine Plan. It also served as a symbol of the eternal assurance that God has promised always to guide His creation. That guidance, now so explicit and complete from the Universal House of Justice, must remain at the forefront of our minds in the years immediately ahead.

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