

# The American Bahá'í

Volume 21, No. 3

'The real treasury of man is his knowledge.'--Bahá'u'lláh

March 1991

## Registration plans for World Congress under way in April



The plans for the 1992 Baha'i World Congress celebration of the centenary of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh are advancing rapidly. The World Congress Logistics Office is pleased to offer the following information:

**Who May Attend.** In accordance with the guidance from the Universal House of Justice, adult Bahá'ís in good standing and Bahá'í children over 12 years of age (born before December 1, 1980) are eligible to register and attend the Congress.

Parents are discouraged from bringing their children under the age of 12 (as of the World Congress dates) to New York City since the Universal House of Justice determined that under the circumstances, "it is impossible to provide a program for children at the World Congress or to permit children under the age of 12 to attend the Congress."

Children cannot be left in hotels unattended. Hotel personnel may contact civil authorities to remove the children should they be found running in the hallways, playing in the elevators, or creating other disturbances. Parents are warned that if the civil authorities are called by hotel personnel, parents will be held liable for their unsupervised children.

**Registration Review.** Registration for this uniquely spiritual event will officially open on April 1, 1991, for a period of about one year. The registration materials will be printed in the three official languages (English, French and Spanish) designated

See CONGRESS page 15

## New look, new vision of excellence to characterize The American Bahá'í

A brand new look--and a new vision of excellence in service to the Cause. For more than 20 years, *The American Bahá'í* was produced using "traditional" methods--that is, with wax, scissors and a T-square. Some months ago, however, the National Spiritual Assembly decided to enlarge the scope and direction of the newspaper, and to bring its method of production in line with recent technological advances in the industry.

New state-of-the-art desktop publishing equipment was ordered, and this month's issue is the first to be produced on that equipment. We hope you like the new look; beyond that, we are confident that you will appreciate the new direction *The American Bahá'í* is to take in the months and years ahead, one that mirrors the vision of the National Spiritual Assembly and the goals of the Universal House of Justice for the Six Year Plan, the completion of the Arc on Mount Carmel, the Holy Year of 1992 and beyond. The focus will be on those aspects of the Cause that are considered most important by the National Assembly based on its mandate from the Universal House of Justice, such as carrying the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to the generality of mankind, the maturation of the community and its institutions, the education of children and youth and the strengthening of Bahá'í family life, and other vital issues.

As a part of that vision and focus, the National Assembly has decided to publish *The American Bahá'í* once every Bahá'í month, or 19 times a year, and to include in its pages important messages and commentary to be used by the Bahá'í community for consultation at the Nineteen Day Feast. The change will take place in a few more months, once the editor and staff are comfortable with the new equipment and able to handle the workload with a minimum of problems.

**Keep It Simple--And Make It Fun!**

A handy guide to teaching through the arts

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**Questions And Answers**

Everything you need to know about Assembly formations

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**'We Have Serious Commitments To Keep'**

17 overseas goals of Plan have yet to be filled

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The Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánúm presides over the official opening last November 11 of the local Bahá'í Center in Sheung Shui, Hong Kong. Helping her cut the ribbon are some of the local Bahá'ís.

## Bahá'í community rises to challenge, contributes record amount in January

The American Bahá'í community has achieved another in a string of victories relating to the Funds of the Faith by contributing record amounts during the month of January. Early returns for February indicate a continuation of the same trend.

Contributions to the National Bahá'í Fund in January were \$1,232,282, an increase of 74 percent over last year's level; this result pushed year-to-date contributions to \$7,373,134, up 28 percent from the

previous year. Contributions to the Bahá'í International Fund thus far this year totaled \$528,706, an increase of 29 percent, while offerings to the Arc Projects Fund were up a remarkable 131 percent, to \$2,640,000. These results have enabled the community to forward a total of \$5,750,000 to the World Center, including earmarked contributions through December.

One outcome from this outpouring of resources has been a reduction in the deficit in the National Fund from a peak of \$4.8 million last August to \$4 million in January. This is an important step forward in reversing a trend that has stood for years, one that has not yielded through the force of events and the Faith's own rapid expansion on so many fronts. The National Assembly's bankers, upon being told of these developments, were astonished.

This most recent progress along the path to reaching the \$25 million annual goal is due to intensive efforts by both local Spiritual Assemblies, in pursuit of their own goals, and individual Bahá'ís. The response of the friends in making these victories possible is truly exemplary. The spirit that underlies such sacrifice must and will, our Teachings assure us, lead to the further advance of the Faith and the protection and blessing of each one of us.

## 'Weekend for Race Unity' held in Wilmette, Illinois

The North Shore Race Unity Task Force, a coalition of organizations and individuals promoting models of race unity, presented a "Weekend for Racial Unity" February 1-3 in Evanston and Wilmette, Illinois.

Among the highlights were talks at Northwestern University and the Bahá'í House of Worship by Dr. Richard Thomas, associate professor of history and urban studies at Michigan State University and author of *Racial Unity: An Imperative for Social Progress*.

Also presented was a panel discussion on "Racial Unity: Models That Work" hosted by Shand Morahan Insurance Company.

**A Fond Farewell Celebration**

Dr. de Araujo steps down as Bahá'í UN representative after 23 years

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**Bahá'ís Observe Dr. King's Birthday**

With variety of events in a number of communities

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## Congress Task Force to host two conferences for media professionals

The Media Task Force for the Bahá'í World Congress is hosting two conferences for Bahá'ís who have professional experience in journalism, TV reporting or production, radio news or production, public relations, film or video production, and photo-journalism.

The conferences will be held at the Los Angeles Bahá'í Center, May 18-19, and at the New York office of the Bahá'í International Community, June 22-23. Media professionals from around the world are invited to attend the conferences.

The Media Task Force recognizes that many Bahá'ís have professional experience in these fields and that such expertise will be invaluable to the international Bahá'í community in its efforts to attract the attention of major news media to the Bahá'í World Congress. The Media Task Force will assist National Spiritual Assemblies to plan contacts with news media and it will coordinate media relations at the World Congress.

Bahá'ís who are media professionals also are asked to send resumes and samples of their work to: Bahá'í World Congress Media Task Force, 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 120, New York, New York 10017.



'Forming a Bahá'í Response to Political Crisis' was the theme of a Bahá'í Forum held February 9 in Brunswick, Maine.

Pictured are Bahá'ís who addressed a number of relevant questions using the Bahá'í writings especially The World Or-

der of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Political Non-Involvement and Obedience to Government.'

## House of Justice answers concern about 'spiritual health'

The following letter to an individual Bahá'í was written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice in response to questions raised about the spiritual health of the American Bahá'í community. The National Spiritual Assembly felt that the issues discussed should be shared with the community as a whole.

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The House of Justice notes your concerns for the spiritual health of the American Bahá'í community, as conveyed in your letter of November 17, 1990, and we are to share the following advice on its behalf.

Our hope as Bahá'ís is that our communities will indeed foster increasing levels of candor, trust and intimacy wherein those practical steps and concerted measures which you allude to may be identified and agreed to in a consultative spirit.

It is understandable if the believers feel a sense of impatience with the apparently slow progress in the expansion of the Cause in certain regions, but they should take heart at the victories being won elsewhere, and even study these for insights into the process of effective teaching and community development. We may take comfort in the following words of the beloved Guardian:

"...every bearer of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh should consider it not only an obligation but a privilege to scatter far and wide the seeds of His Faith, and to rest content in the abiding knowledge that whatever be the immediate response to that Message, and however inadequate the vehicle that conveyed it, the power of its Author will, as He sees fit, enable those seeds to germinate, and in circumstances which no one can foresee enrich the harvest which the labor of His followers will gather..." (The Advent of Divine Justice [Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984], p. 53)

As for acknowledging problems, should an institution of the Faith become aware of a problem within the community, it would

seem that the most prudent course of action is usually to draw attention to underlying spiritual principles, or to encourage the believers along pathways of growth and development; an example would be the December 29, 1988, letter of the House of Justice on individual rights and freedoms in the Bahá'í community.

There is a great difference between illuminating a wrong that should be put right, and simply indulging in criticism. Then too, there are differing perceptions about what is the appropriate method for sharing critical information; circumspection and wisdom are needed.

The Bahá'í Teachings define marriage as a sacred institution. Our Faith brooks no compromise with those pernicious theories which assert, for example, that maintaining a single monogamous relationship throughout one's lifetime is an unreasonable expectation.

You may be interested to know that the Research Department at the World Center has recently produced a compilation titled "Preserving Bahá'í Marriages" which was designed with the idea that the friends needed to have easily at hand resources from the ocean of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings which might enable them to acquire a more profound sense of Bahá'í marriage as a bulwark against the disintegrating forces of materialism which continue to derange the foundations of mankind's ordered life. This compilation is in the process of being mailed now to National Spiritual Assemblies.

With regard to vitalizing the Nineteen Day Feast, this has been addressed in a letter dated August 27, 1989, from the Universal House of Justice to the followers of Bahá'u'lláh which is enclosed for your information. You are advised that your ideas for structuring Bahá'í newsletters should be directed to your local or National Assembly, as appropriate.

If you are in possession of specific practical skills which you feel may be of benefit to your fellow-believers, perhaps you might consider volunteering yourself as a facili-

tator of a training course, to be offered at some suitable venue, whether for the members of your immediate community or perhaps at a regional institute. It should be borne in mind, however, that the believers are not obliged to accept theories and methods from outside the Cause, though they may find it useful to adopt certain practices which common experience has shown to be useful in organizing affairs, so long as these accord with the spirit and principles of the Faith.

As you rightly point out in your letter, fresh approaches must be taken if we are to discover together effective methods for propagating and establishing the Cause of God. The House of Justice emphasized in its recent Riván message, as you may no doubt have noted, that there should be scope and freedom for diversity of action, because it is recognized that there are ways of serving our precious Cause.

Regarding the flow of information, while some communities may find it useful to conduct an annual survey, it is worth noting that there is provision in the Cause for airing of concerns from the grassroots at each Nineteen Day Feast. Eventually, as the friends learn to take fuller and more effective advantage of this divinely conceived mechanism, it will be seen how truly wondrous is this divine economy which the Blessed Beauty has bequeathed.

You express a longing for greater openness and deeper ties among the believers, for more tolerance of authentic diversity and for greater discipline on the part of the individual and the community. You draw attention to the need for greater sensitivity and cite the importance of cultivating the art of listening, and for enhanced attention to the practical applications of our Faith in all arenas, and to the objectives of the Six Year Plan. These concerns are indeed urgent and compelling, but depend for their successful prosecution upon individual grassroots initiative, forbearance, and resolve, perhaps even more than upon administration, vital as that is.

The following admonitions of the beloved Guardian may be relevant to your meditations:

"The friends must be patient with each other and must realize that the Cause is still in its infancy and its institutions are not yet functioning perfectly. The greater the patience, the loving understanding and the forbearance the believers show toward each other and their shortcomings, the greater will be the progress of the whole Bahá'í community at large." (From a letter dated February 27, 1943, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

Moreover, we are urged to "study deeply the teachings, teach others, study with those Bahá'ís who are anxious to do so, the deeper teachings of our Faith, and through example, effort and prayer, bring about a change." (From a letter dated September 30, 1949, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

It is only as individuals and their communities realize a profound transformation that that dynamic unity foreshadowed in the Teachings will gradually evolve; what will catalyze this change is a more comprehensive and systematic attention to the Covenant and its requirements.

Be assured that the House of Justice will pray ardently in the Holy Shrines on your behalf that your devoted efforts in the path of service to His exalted Cause may be bountifully confirmed.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

The Universal House of Justice  
Department of the Secretariat  
December 24, 1990

Notice to those planning to travel to Israel: all Bahá'ís must secure permission of the Universal House of Justice before traveling to Israel, for whatever reason.

The address of the Universal House of Justice is P.O. Box 155, Haifa 31 001, Israel.