



encyclopedia of world problems and human potential

RUE WASHINGTON 40 - 1030 BRUXELLES (BELGIUM) - TEL (32 2) 440 41 09 - FAX (32 2) 649 32 69 - TELEX 65080 INAC B

PRESS RELEASE
12th August 1994

AUSTRALIANS HUNTING 10,000 WORLD PROBLEMS IN BRUSSELS

Two Australians, working in Brussels, have just completed production of a massive *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*. Anthony Judge (from Melbourne) and Nadia McLaren (from Adelaide) have worked for several years within the framework of the Union of International Associations (UIA) to complete a publication that documents some 10,000 world problems recognized by international organizations and constituencies around the world.

The problems include everything from boredom and landmines, through a multitude of environmental and trading problems, to the many forms of abuse of human rights. The Encyclopedia, now in its fourth edition, is especially attentive to little known problems such as compassion fatigue or oestrogenic chemical pollution, and to those, like abduction by extraterrestrials, which are the prime concern of essentially marginalized groups. This example underscores the bias of the Encyclopedia in covering perceptions with which some people identify, whether or not the "facts" are challenged by some other constituency, as was the case with acid rain, and is still the case with global warming.

The European Union and NATO are not the only international bodies that are headquartered in Brussels. In fact there are 1,125 non-governmental and 183 governmental international bodies with offices there. These form part of the universe of some 20,000 international non-profit bodies documented by the UIA in its 3-volume *Yearbook of International Organizations*. They range from Amnesty International, through international associations and networks of every kind and persuasion, to bodies such as the Club of Rome. The UIA was itself founded in Brussels in 1907 ("before the rush") as a clearinghouse for information on international organizations, especially non-governmental. It is such bodies which were the prime source of material for inclusion in the Encyclopedia.

Anthony Judge has worked with the UIA since 1968 and is currently responsible for the development of its computer system and the associated publication and research programme. This includes such periodicals as the quarterly *International Congress Calendar* registering some 10,000 scheduled international meetings up to the year 2010. He is also active in such bodies as the World Futures Studies Federation which recently transferred its secretariat to the Communication Centre at the Queensland University of Technology.

Nadia McLaren specialized in environmental studies at the University of Adelaide and then, in 1980, created a consultancy group Social and Ecological Assessment (SEA). In 1989 she moved to Norway and became involved in the Global Action Plan -- a new NGO concerned with building sustainable lifestyle practices on a household by household basis. She is currently its international operations director.

From 1992 until March this year she has worked on the "world problems" volume of the 3-volume Encyclopedia. The most unusual aspect of the task was weaving together a network of some 120,000 relationships between these problems to highlight chains of aggravating relationships within the problem ecology. This "hypertext editing" calls upon skills and insights which depend on special software enhancement. She is now working on the third volume of the Encyclopedia, scheduled for publication in mid-1995. This documents international strategies and solutions in response to world problems.

In its second volume, the human potential focus of the Encyclopedia provides an extraordinary amount of information on some 5,000 approaches to human development from different psychological and spiritual traditions, including the most comprehensive coverage of some 3,000 modes of awareness reportedly associated with such development. Other sections document several thousand positive and negative values and the dilemmas to which they give rise. A section on metaphors documents the ways that these may be seen as an unexplored resource for new approaches to policy-making. A unique achievement is to link human values both to specific world problems and to specific modes of human development.

With a multi-lingual staff of only 20, the UIA is a small, high-tech, low budget organization that has successfully adapted to the challenges of the emerging information society. It is currently adapting its reference book information to CD-ROM, but is also exploring ways of visualizing that information, notably in virtual reality environments. The UIA sees its underlying challenge as how to provide knowledge in a form which will enable new forms of organization, policy-making and information exchange possible.