



newsletter

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MODEL UN—MeMunc 2004

The fifth UNA-Maine annual Model UN Conference, held May 18-20 on the Gorham campus of the University of Southern Maine, was by any standard a great success. It set a number of records: Nearly 300 students from 15 high schools, of which three (East Lynne CT, Colchester VT and Newburyport MA) were from out of state. The students represented 100 governments and 15 judges of the International Court of Justice. They served in six UN organs plus a press corps.

Governor John Baldacci was the keynote speaker. He spoke at some length, to the rapt attention of the students, describing his formative years as a first-generation American, working at his parents' restaurant in Bangor. He spoke of his high school friendship with another first-generation American, Bill Cohen (later US Senator and Secretary of Defense), who delivered his father's bakery goods to the Baldacci restaurant. The Governor spoke about the value of diversity in our population; the importance of good neighborliness with our trading partners and of how Maine's global commercial outreach reflected the interdependence of nations in today's world. Following his prepared remarks, Governor Baldacci opened the floor for questions from the students. An early questioner sought the Governor's views on the situation in Iraq. In his reply, Governor Baldacci spoke of his desire for an international approach, through the United Nations system, saying "no nation can go it alone in today's world."

Editor's comments:

i) Given the demands on the Governor's time and his limited capacity to accept invitations to speak, one may be forgiven for wondering what led the Governor to accept the invitation from the USM students who organized the model UN conference. A clue to the answer may lie in the identity of the Conference Secretary General, graduating USM senior Emily Ainsworth, who had worked as an intern in Governor Baldacci's office.

ii) On June 1st, the Governor was the guest of honor at a political reception in Boothbay Harbor, at which I was present. In greeting the Governor there, I said that I had last seen him at the model UN conference in Gorham. Governor Baldacci replied: "It was the high point of my year!"

Conference Management

For the first time in the history of model UN activities in Maine, the entire conference was managed by USM students. They selected the UN organs to be portrayed, devised their agendas, determined which of the 15 high schools would be assigned representational responsibilities for which governments. They selected the USM students to officiate in the various organs and cooper-

ated with the USM administration for assignment of meeting spaces and dormitory accommodations, provision of meals and all conference logistics.

UNA-Maine Board of Directors Participation

Julia Edwards, a graduating USM senior and member of our Board, was one of the principal managers of the Conference. She is a veteran of model UN exercises around the world, and in MeMunc 2004 she served as President of the International Court of Justice. Other members of the Board served as coaches to the various UN organs, including Wendy Hazard, Bruce Stedman, Thurston Holt, Lee Rushmore, Lydia Sparrow, Trudi Schneider and Sarah Walton.

Some Conference Conclusions:

International Court of Justice

Fifteen high school students sat as judges of the Court to hear a case brought by the Government of Iraq, alleging that the United States had acted illegally in making its pre-emptive attack. After hearing oral presentations by representatives of both countries, the court decided against Iraq by a vote of 12 to 3, accepting the US argument that Iraq's being out of compliance with a series of Security Council resolutions adopted in past years constituted sufficient legal basis for the attack.

The **UN Commission on Human Rights** considered a resolution against the practice of female genital mutilation; the **General Assembly** debated the possibility of arming the monks of Tibet to resist incursions by China; the **Special GA Session on Food** approved establishment of a commission by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to provide permanent water filtration and distribution bases in needy countries, to teach efficient farming methods and encourage free trade. The **African Union** debated measures to stem the AIDS crisis in Africa.

Awards

At the conclusion of the Conference, the USM student organizers, in consultation with the high school teachers who accompanied the high school participants and with the coaches, selected "best" and "most diplomatic" student delegates for each of the organs, and selected the "best" high school delegation, which was Waynefleet School of Portland. These were difficult choices, since the conference organizers and coaches all agreed that the quality of the participating high school students set

Anna Astvatsaturova

You may not remember her last name, but many members will certainly remember Anna as the impressive law student who helped to organize and host our UN Day Conference in 2002, "Eyes on the ICC" (International Criminal Court) in Portland. At that time Anna, an Armenian refugee

from Azerbaijan — she became a US citizen in 1997 — was President of the International Law Society of the University of Maine School of Law. She received her J.D. in May of 2003 and was named by Who's Who American Law Students as "outstanding law student of the year." Anna's interest in the International Criminal Court relates to her determination that the appalling historic genocide of Armenian people "is recognized and never forgotten by the world, and, more importantly, that it doesn't ever happen again to anyone."

Anna attended the final ICC Preparatory Commission meeting in July 2003 and the first Assembly of States Parties as a delegate of the Independent Student Coalition for the ICC. More recently, she became the ISC-ICC's Director of Education Programs, a post from which she resigned when she took up an internship with the ICC itself in the Hague. As an intern, she attended, among other things, meetings of the Trust Fund for Victims (of crimes against humanity), in which Queen Rania and Prince Zeid of Jordan participated. Anna has now returned to the United States, and we hope and expect that she will attend a UNA-Maine meeting in the near future to tell us about her experi-

Charles Weitz Award

When he left Maine last September, Charles Weitz was the longest-serving member of the Chapter's Board of Directors. Over 13 years, Charles had given yeoman service to UNA-Maine. His influence was the principal reason that we embarked, five years ago, on a continuing program of support for Model UN conferences in Maine.

We wanted to give Charles a tangible expression of our gratitude for his service, but what could one give to a man who had everything? At President Wendy Hazard's suggestion, a happy solution was found by creation of the Charles Weitz award, a book prize to be given annually to a Maine high school junior who showed deep interest in international affairs and a commitment to international peace.

The first award was given last May to Kaitlin Katsiaficas, a junior at the Portland High School, who was unanimously selected for this recognition by teachers and members of her school's administration. Kaitlin is active in the PHS International Club; she was a member of PHS's first Model UN team, and plans to go on to college to study international relations. The award was presented to Kaitlin at the high school's graduation exercises by Wendy Hazard and Dr. Phil Thompson of UNA-Maine's Board.

Letters to the Editor

Part of the mission of UNA-Maine is to inform the public of UN activities. With that end in view, the Board decided to launch a campaign of "Letters to the Editor" which would concern themselves with various "days" in the year which have been selected by the UN General Assembly to commemorate international organizations and achievements.

Members may have noticed three such letters which have appeared widely in Maine newspapers, written by Board members. Letters concerning International Telecommunications Day (May 17th) and World Environment Day (June 5th) were written by Bruce Stedman, and a letter about the International Day of United Nations Peace-keepers, was written by Board member Alfred M. Niese. We hope that these letters, and others that will follow, will serve to educate Mainers about little-known but vitally important UN activities.

Out of the Mouths of Babes

Board member Mary Lee Rushmore of New Harbor was sorting some old family papers and came across the text of a speech she had given as a sixth-grader at a graduation exercise of the North Side School in East Williston NY, on June 2nd, 1948. Here are some excerpts from her remarks:

"We have weakened the United Nations over the last two years by some of our hasty, and, shall I say, selfish decisions. For example:

- The announcement of the Truman Doctrine, without prior consultation with the United Nations — we bypassed the United Nations.

- The closing down of UNRRA. With all its faults, this organization represented a very significant international cooperative effort. By ending it, the United States put food into , and weakened the world's faith in the moral principles of democracy.

- Our shifting policy regarding Palestine is another example of hasty decisions.

- We have not given adequate financial support to the United Nations. In view of our expenditure of \$400 for military preparations as against each \$1 we put into the efforts toward this international organization, are we really its champions as we claim to be?

- We should strengthen the United Nations by supporting its agencies.

- We must live with Russia and the rest of the world. We can, if the United Nations is strong. It could be changed into a world federal government.....National sovereignty is the stumbling block to world government.

News Bites from the UN Wire

Again we publish here excerpts from UN Wire's daily news bulletins, selecting interesting items which were not widely publicized in the mass media. UN Wire is available on the internet at www.unwire.org/subscribe.

04/02/04 Spying is commonplace at the UN, diplomats say. Long before British cabinet minister Clare Short announced in February that she had read transcripts of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's negotiations over the Iraq war, UN workers knew that their conversations at the UN headquarters were subject to eavesdropping, according to a Los Angeles Times report published today.

"....It's like a candy store" one former high-ranking CIA official at the US Mission to the United Nations said, on condition of anonymity. "Nothing, nobody is off limits."

04/13/04 Global warming will cause plants to bloom early, possibly leaving some migrating birds without food. Ac-

ording to scientists at Australia's Monash University and at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, for each one degree of rise in annual temperature, virtually every plant would come into flower days sooner, which could have serious consequences for some migratory birds which travel thousands of miles each year to feed on flowering plants.

04/03/04 The number of terrorist attacks around the world last year was the lowest since 1969, a decrease the US State Department attributes to "unprecedented collaboration between the United States and foreign partners to defeat terrorism, CNN reports.

05/03/04 World Bank head Wolfensohn rebuked rich nations for failing to make good on their publicized statements in support of foreign aid. He said governments spend \$900 billion on defense and \$60 billion for aid, of which only a fraction is in cash.

05/04/04 Sudan today was re-elected as a member of the UN Human Rights Commission, a controversial move that was protested by the United States and human rights groups, after the African Group of UN member states late last week presented a list of four candidates for four open seats, guaranteeing the election of Sudan, Kenya, Guinea and Togo. After the Economic and Social Council voting took place, the US delegation walked out of the conference, saying that reports of "ethnic cleansing" in the Darfur region made Sudan's election "entirely inappropriate."

05/24/04 The World Health Organizations decision-making body wrapped up its annual meeting Saturday by unanimously endorsing a controversial strategy on diet and exercise, aimed at curbing noncommunicable illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease that collectively account for almost half of the world's disease burden. In January, the United States had said that the plan was based on faulty evidence and overstepped the UN body's mandate, an objection criticized by US and world health agencies as an attempt to placate the food and sugar industries.

05/17/04 Kuwaiti women may soon be able to vote and run for seats in the parliament, after the Cabinet yesterday approved a draft law on the issue. According to Reuters, women constitute up to 70 percent of college graduates in Kuwait, although they account for less than five percent of the nation's decision-makers.

06/10/04 Norwegian officials are planning a massive dumping of popcorn into a fjord near the city of Molde today, to stimulate an oil spill, the Associated Press reports. When popcorn absorbs water it forms a viscous goo that has the consistency of oil and mimics oil's response to ocean currents. Norway is the world's third largest oil exporter.

06/18/04 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan yesterday expressed his opposition to a US-sponsored resolution that would renew immunity for UN peacekeepers from selected countries, including the United States, against prosecution by the International Court of Justice (ICC). "The blanket exemption is wrong. It is of dubious judicial value, and I don't think it should be encouraged by the Security Council," Annan told reporters.

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