

**Address to Chief Examiner's meeting: by video-link from Geneva to Cardiff
15 October 2004**

I am very sorry that I am unable to be with you this morning. A short but sharp illness in Istanbul earlier in the week has completely disrupted my travel schedule meaning that I am missing my first chief examiners' meeting in six years.

I particularly wanted to join you on this occasion for several reasons:

- To support the President of the Council of Foundation who has travelled from the United States especially to speak at your dinner tonight.
- To say thank you to John McCabe on his retirement from the chair of the examining board and to express my personal appreciation for the wonderful work he has done in that position.
- To say welcome to Eleri Jones whom I know well enough to know that she will be an equally strong guardian of IB assessment standards.
- To say thank you to each of you who, as chief examiners, are supporting each of our three strategic themes; quality, access and infrastructure. I am extremely grateful for the support and advice that you continue to give to the IBO.

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I want to bring you back to basics this morning. I believe (although it does not say so on the programme) that I am expected to speak about the strategic plan. But most of what there is to understand about the strategic plan can be learned from our website. Very important though it is, the strategic plan is a means to an end. That end is described in our mission statement and this morning I have selected one phrase of it to occupy us during the next 20 minutes:

...help to create a better and a more peaceful world

You are one of the IBO groups that is in a position to bring about change. Not dramatic change, but the assessment demands that you make, the assessment tools that you choose, the knowledge and skills that you decide to measure, the priority that you give to this or to that – they all add up to a style of learning (whatever your specialist subject) that either reinforces or ignores the mission of the IBO.

I have no Powerpoint presentation. I have no overhead projector transparencies. Instead I have a small, green pamphlet and someone else's speech.

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Let us start just over three years ago, in September 2001 when, of course, there was only one date of significance: September 11. I remember leaving Peterson House that afternoon and listening to the breaking news on the taxi radio as Joe Clinch, our treasurer, and I were driven to Newport station. On the train to London it slowly became clear that something unprecedented had happened; something that was outside our normal range of understanding and therefore outside our normal range of

response. However, even the bleakest moments (perhaps I should say *particularly* the bleakest moments) can provoke exceptional responses and I remember thinking, and perhaps even saying, if only to bring some consolation to the sense of desolation, “Here is a unique moment in history, when a particular response could change the world for ever.”

Of course it didn't happen but I still believe (was it total naivety?) that Bill Clinton, flanked by Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan, might have said, “Let us pause for a moment and think very carefully about what this tragedy means for America and for the rest of the World. We are not going to retaliate; still less are we going to launch pre-emptive strikes. The thousands of innocent people who have just lost their lives deserve better than that. Instead, and for the moment we are not quite sure how so we need your help, we are going to mobilize the forces for peace throughout the world”. Well, it was probably absurdly Utopian, and, in reality, the US President was still rather inexperienced and lacked a confident mandate from his own people.

The result has been a story of increasing destabilization: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Palestine and, most particularly, Iraq. Random (but probably carefully planned) atrocities occur in Bali, Jakarta, Istanbul, Egypt, Madrid...and on it goes. The world awaits a second 9/11, the only real questions being when and where.

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Thus it was that a particular sentence stood out from a wonderful speech given by Malcolm McKenzie, headmaster of Atlantic College, at a conference ten days ago of the Alliance for International Education, in Düsseldorf.

“We must be prepared”, he said, “to build a new agenda with radical thoughts about a global sense of community...Foremost amongst these radical thoughts must be the challenge to the deep-seated view that war is an inevitable aspect of the human condition. I don't mean here the platitudes that politicians spout when they say, as they have always said after disasters, ‘This will never happen again’. I am thinking of a different set of perceptions that starts from a genuinely global village and says, ‘This is one community and therefore the only possibility of war is civil war and we should be able to prevent that’”.

I was reminded of my reaction when the war against Iraq was launched. Whatever the moral reasons for it or against it, for grown-up nations entering the 21st century to drop bombs and launch missiles seemed so utterly medieval and inappropriate. Of course, those bombs and missiles are not medieval at all; they are ‘smart’ and when I first visited Baghdad in 1995 I saw the results of a misguided smart bomb that had exploded inside a shelter during the first Gulf War. Etched on the walls were the carbonised images of those who had been sheltering there: many of them young students.

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And so I come to the green pamphlet because 50 years before Malcolm McKenzie, someone else was looking for peace. Someone else was asking how we might

become one global community. But she was looking in French: “Comment sortir de ce brouillard et surtout de la passion, qui est encore et surtout nationale? Comment éduquer ces foules liseuses de journaux, écouteuses de radio, afin qu’elles lisent et écoutent avec leur raison et non avec leurs émotions? Comment élargir leur horizon au-delà de l’environnement familial, dont elles ignorent qu’il dépend du grand tout économique qu’est le globe?”.

How can we widen their horizons beyond their familiar surroundings which they don’t realise depend upon a global economy?

Not bad for 1948. It was written by a remarkable lady, Marie-Thérèse Maurette, who was at the time the head of the International School of Geneva (Ecolint), in a pamphlet prepared for UNESCO entitled, “Ways of teaching education for peace. Do they exist?”

Indeed they do, she insisted, and she went on to explain what they are. Rubbing shoulders with students and teachers from different cultural backgrounds is a help, but it is not enough. There must be a deliberate, planned intervention. For example, she suggests, everything possible should be done to minimise the concept of ‘nationality’ in order to encourage the student to develop a picture of the whole world. Quite contrary to conventional wisdom, then and now, she insisted that the student should go from the general to the particular, from the unknown to the known. Atlases should start with map of the world rather than individual countries; the Swiss should realise that more people live in Paris than live in Switzerland.

History should not be taught until well into adolescence because, for the younger student, it inevitably consists of a series of stories and myths glorifying violence and misrepresenting events by giving them a nationalistic bias. She then goes on to grapple with the possibility of studying international history. Bob Leach, who would have read this pamphlet, must have been influenced by it when he designed the very first IB programme of world history at Ecolint in the early ‘60s.

Not surprisingly, Maurette was totally committed to bilingualism which she saw as an essential element of international-mindedness. “The role of language in widening horizons and reducing the concept of ‘foreignness’ is very important”, she insisted. It is important psychologically to be willing to subordinate one’s national superiority by speaking to the other person, however imperfectly, in their mother tongue.

She was fascinated by current events and by the power of newspapers and the radio. How can one obtain impartial, international information, she asked, and I wonder what she would have made today of the BBC World Service, the International Herald Tribune and Al Jazeera.

Finally, Maurette insisted on the importance of community service and she describes how students ran a cooperative, selling stationery and food, redistributing the profits, often to support community projects.

Maurette had strong left-wing political views. As post-war Geneva developed into an important centre of the international business community, the International School lost contact with its Francophone origins and she became isolated in an increasingly

Anglo-Saxon and alien environment. The crisis came in 1950 when she resigned in protest against what she saw as the United States' manipulation of the United Nations in its involvement against the communist forces in Korea. She returned to her home in Hendaye in South West France and was not heard of again.

If Alec Peterson was the father of the IB then Marie-Therese Maurette was its mother and twenty years before the IBO was conceived she was writing about and rehearsing many of its challenges. I have revived her memory today because she realised very clearly that international mindedness is not acquired by some instinctive process of cultural osmosis. It requires specific interventions; a carefully designed programme of educational activities. It is taught, not caught.

You, as our key diploma examiners, are part of the process of international education to which the IB is committed, and which makes it a distinctive organization. I hope that in your discussions, in your paper setting, in your grade-award meetings, in your recommendations you will continue to do all you can to stress that international dimension.

In the pamphlet, Maurette quotes the words a former student of the International School, a Polish Jew who had been imprisoned in Auschwitz during the second world war. The student wrote, "But I think what Ecolint has taught me can best be expressed in the words of Saint-Exupéry:

Etre homme, c'est précisément être responsable. C'est connaître la honte en face d'une misère qui ne semble pas dépendre de soi.

To be a human being is to accept responsibility. It is to experience shame when you are confronted by misery which apparently has nothing to do with you.

But let me give Malcolm McKenzie the final word:

Time is tight. No doubt every generation thinks its problems are urgent but ours are surely more urgent than ever before. This world, our only planet is in danger of slipping out of our grasp....An education fit for the needs of our time is a vital key to a viable human future. We have to prepare our students for the whole planet, not merely for a part of it.

I want to thank you for all you are doing in your support for the IB and to urge you never to forget that part of our mission which requires us ...*to help to create a better and a more peaceful world.*

George Walker
director general
09.10.04