



Nemi Fredner and colleague Poover.

Nemi Fredner: Carrying on a family tradition

On 4 May Ms. Nemi Fredner celebrated her tenth year of service at UNDP (Technical Advisory Division) with a large and joyous programme held in the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium. Following is an interview with Ms. Fredner.

Question: You recently observed your tenth anniversary of service at UNDP with a programme and reception attended by over 200 staff members. What prompted you to celebrate this occasion?

Ms. Fredner: The tenth anniversary was really just an excuse to invite as many colleagues as possible to share in an inspiring and festive occasion. I feel that I have received much in my life, and I would like to give as much as possible to others, especially those with whom I have been working for a number of years.

Question: You have been a secretary at UNDP. Have you found the work challenging? Rewarding? Frustrating? Degrading?

Ms. Fredner: I do not find secretarial work degrading, particularly because it is a form of

service, and I believe that one has to be equally willing to serve or to lead as necessity demands, with equal dignity and grace.

Question: As a UN staff member, I'm curious about this one—Do you feel yourself to be a UNDP staff member, a UN staff member, or both, and in what order of priority?

Ms. Fredner: I am very much a UNDP staff member, and lucky enough to have become acquainted with several hundred of my colleagues because of the nature of my work and the manageable size of UNDP headquarters. However, I feel that I belong to the UN as a whole, both because of the strong dedication of the Peace Meditation Group at the UN, to which I belong, and because of my family background: my mother was a social secretary to the first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, and my father's brother served as a UN administrative officer from 1946 until his death in 1964. I feel as though I was destined for the UN!

Question: I understand that you were an undergraduate at Radcliffe College and completed graduate studies at Columbia Teachers College and that, in fact, you originally had some difficulty in being allowed to stay at UNDP as a secretary because of your academic achievements. Why did you want to stay at UNDP? Do you ever have any regrets about the turn your career has taken at the United Nations?

Ms. Fredner: I was always geared toward a highly academic life, but found myself more interested in pursuing spiritual goals than in fulfilling intellectual or professional ambitions. As a member of the Meditation Group at the UN, I have benefited immeasurably from the inspiration of Sri Chinmoy, and I try to take to heart his message, as powerfully conveyed in this poem:

"My Lord,

Do teach me only one thing:
How to love the world
The way You love me."

I have no regrets about taking up secretarial service, because I am fortunate to know what I want

out of life. Although my workload is often heavy, I feel free to be exactly the person I want to be, without conforming to the pressures, both self-imposed and external, of professional aims. My spiritual life provides me with many opportunities to follow my interests and capacities, such as music and writing.

I am very pleased to be with UNDP because I believe that it is achieving significant results in the developing world, and I try to put my full commitment into my work.

Question: What do you feel are some of UNDP's greatest strengths? In what areas would you see greater improvements to be made?

Ms. Fredner: I don't consider myself qualified to comment on UNDP's performance in a technical way. However, I think we can all feel that our great strength is our direct involvement in development projects which produce measurable results and lasting impact in so many countries. As far as improvements are concerned, I think the most important improvement for UNDP, as for the UN as a whole, would be for us to unabashedly rededicate ourselves, on a daily basis, to the founding principles of the UN; to be openly proud of and committed to our work, whatever our level may be; and to set aside the wish for personal gain in the interest of the UN as a whole, especially during this time when we are subject to both valid and unfair criticisms from all sides. I would also hope that each staff member could feel that his or her attitude and performance do make a difference; in fact, they shape the fate of our organization.

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