

department—Health and Welfare—and that was helpful because they were interested and would lend a little weight and support.

“To understand UNICEF properly I think you have to begin by recognizing that it is an anomaly. It was created in 1946 [as the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund] to provide a temporary palliative for a postwar emergency situation. No thought was given at that time to fitting it into the United Nations complex or to endowing it with any long-term objectives. It is quite impossible to classify. It is not a specialized agency; it is part of the UN proper, but has its own Board, its own staff and its own funds, which consist solely of voluntary contributions.

“One day at the end of its first emergency period it was suddenly recognized as having a potential for helping to meet the long-term needs of children in the developing countries. So, instead of the oblivion which had been planned for it at the opening of the 1950 session of the General Assembly, it was confronted with a reprieve and a challenge—but given only the most general mandate. It was still an anomaly. This created, and will continue to create, some confusion in the public mind. ‘Why is there a children’s fund working in the fields of various agencies; surely this is overlapping and lack of co-ordination, and so on....’ In many ways I think this curious status of UNICEF has probably been a strength to it because, if your mandate is the welfare of children, you are bound to no single discipline. You can—and indeed you must—explore all problems affecting children for which external aid might be useful. You can pioneer, you can experiment, you can make mistakes....

“When you are confronted with needs—and particularly needs about which nobody else seems to be doing anything—[you are] tempted to rush in and not to wait until everything is well planned and propitious. UNICEF has more than once yielded to this temptation. Perhaps the fact that we are not a technical agency, and may be less aware than they of the problems to be confronted, makes this an easy thing for us to do. It is no secret that we have, at times, proceeded at a pace faster than the technical agencies thought prudent. But I, for one, am quite impenitent about having tried to meet these broad needs. I believe that many children are better off because of some of these efforts, even though they have not achieved a 100 per cent success. This does not mean, of course, that we should not learn in the light of experience....”

As Margaret Catley-Carlson points out later in this book, UNICEF has managed to avoid nearly all the political entanglements and ideological pitfalls that surround other parts of the United Nations. Here, Adelaide Sinclair tells of an exceptional incident involving her program. It was known by some in UNICEF as “the Cuba problem”:

“In 1964, a month or so before the Executive Board was to meet in Bangkok, there was a hurricane—Hurricane Flora—that made a straight path through the Caribbean. It hit Trinidad and Tobago, then the Dominican Republic and then Cuba. It was a brute, and they all wanted help.

“I remember Dick Heyward [a senior UNICEF official] talking about this as he was passing somewhere and commenting that the United States might object to aid to Cuba. Well, I said, ‘If Cuba has been hit by the