

## Angus Archer

### A Third Window with a Fresh View

Since graduating from Carleton University in history and political science in 1963, Angus Archer's career has been almost entirely devoted to building coalitions between and among Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). He worked first with the Overseas Institute of Canada under Roby Kidd, then spent three years with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) helping to run its Young World Appeal Program, in which links were made between youth groups in industrialized countries and young farmers throughout the Third World. After six years in Ottawa building up the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, he became chief of special projects with the UN's Centre (now Division) for Economic and Social Information (CESI) in New York. But, as he says, he did not enjoy working with the media as much as with NGOs, and he took steps to return as quickly as possible to the latter. After returning, he helped to set up the "third window" for NGOs to gain access to the UN system: the Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), of which he is the co-ordinator in New York.

"I quickly saw the tremendous difference between working with NGOs and working with press and media. In my view, media people are flighty, they don't take issues seriously for any sustained period nor do they look at issues in depth and follow through. They write their story and run away.... In my work with CESI I found myself jumping from one issue and one set of journalists to another. The thing that bothered me most was the lack of follow-through. You would have, for instance, a World Conference on Population in Bucharest in 1974—my first assignment—and the Food Conference in Rome also in 1974; and you would come back from those conferences—there were close to 2 000 journalists at the Rome meeting—and talk to Canadian or American journalists and say, 'Now what can you do on these issues beyond that?' and you would hear inevitably, 'Oh, no, I've been reassigned. I'm sorry. I'm dealing with the environment [or local politics] now.'

"It was at the World Food Conference that we saw a gleam in the eye of many NGO representatives and the beginning of the Non-Governmental Liaison Services. A few of us saw a unique phenomenon there, of NGOs from developed countries doing an extremely effective job of influencing their own governments, knowing as much about food aid and food security issues as the government delegates did, sending regular telexes back to their friends in Parliament or Congress so that the right questions were raised, and to newspaper editors so that editorials were written. This happened to the point that the Canadian delegation became aware—for the first time—that it was being closely watched and monitored as to what it was doing in Rome and that this was being publicly aired back in Canada. I think the food aid contribution of Canada doubled within a week of the conference. I don't believe that would have happened without this pressure. And the Dutch were doing the same, and the Nordics, and to a lesser extent the Americans.

"Two of us already in the UN—Ross Mountain from New Zealand, who was in the Social Affairs department, and I—called an *ad hoc* meeting during the Rome Conference of all the activist NGOs, about 50 people, and explored the idea of a new kind of service that the UN might provide, which would be system-wide and not just from the UN or from FAO or from UNESCO