

## Message to the Delegates at Hobart

### From Frank Dunbaugh

I regret that I am not among you. But I feel so strongly about the movement to abolish the criminal law that I have a need to send you this message in addition to the paper that I submitted to the organizers of ICOPA 11.

Please do not leave Hobart without working on a plan to implement our common goal. I truly understand that – in order to believe in the abolition of the criminal law system – each of us must have a mother lode of anarchy embedded deep in our genes. But we should not allow that bias to keep us from organizing to pool our efforts toward common objectives. This means that we must agree (more or less) on our objectives, and we must have a plan for achieving those objectives, as well as a method for implementing that plan.

When I attended ICOPA 1 in Toronto in 1983, our sole objective was to ensure that ICOPA 1 was not the last ICOPA. We put together a small committee to see to it that ICOPA 2 would be organized in Europe. It was only through the immense efforts of our founder, the now departed Dr. Ruth Morris, that the ICOPA conferences have continued all of these years. Serious abolitionists must fear that without Ruth's dedication and energy, the movement will stop moving.

But, unlike Toronto in 1983, when the abolition movement was just emerging, ICOPA now has a rich history. Until now, it appears that a main objective was to spread the ICOPA message to the whole world, and in large part we have achieved that mission. We have had 4 conferences in North America (Toronto, Montreal, Bloomington IN & Toronto), 3 conferences in Europe (Amsterdam, Warsaw & Barcelona), 2 conferences in Oceania (Auckland & Hobart), and one each in Africa (Lagos) and in Latin America (San Jose). While we still need to meet in Asia (more than once) and again in Latin America and Africa, it is time for us to seek a new objective.

Instead of continuing our quest for new geographic frontiers, I suggest that we consider reaching out for particular **individuals** of the type we need to make our movement successful. Who are they? In our Canadian and Australian conferences there has seemed to be some emphasis on persons who have been the victims of the criminal law system – former prisoners. In our conferences in Spanish speaking nations, there were many lawyers and judges who participated. In the conferences at the Universities in Amsterdam and Bloomington, there was a helpful academic presence. Nearly all of the conferences have had useful input from people with a religious interest in reform. Leaders from these fields and others could be recruited.

Wouldn't it be a good idea for each of us to make a list of people (actual names and contact information), not necessarily well known, who might be persuaded to join our movement and who could influence others. The name of ex-prisoner and lawyer, Nelson Mandela, comes immediately to mind. In connection with the paper I submitted to this conference I read a number of books and articles about human rights. Some of those authors should be approached in a dignified and respectful manner with a well-organized abolitionist message.

That suggests that a group of abolitionists need to put together a package of materials for the people we try to recruit. There should be a bibliography of the best academic papers and a library (or website) where they can be found. Who is going to do this? Is the message different for nations with English common law roots than for code nations? How will we be able to stay in touch with one another? Has Justice Action agreed to maintain an ICOPA website (and an

ICOPA mailing list)? For how long and with what financial support? Who can contribute to the website and how? These kinds of questions should be on your minds all during ICOPA 11.