

## Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe: 23rd General Meeting 6-12 October 1991: Grand St. Bernard, Switzerland

# "Christ Became Poor For Our Sake"

The 23rd General Meeting of EYCE took place in an 11th Century Monastery 2475m above sea level in the heights of the Swiss Alps. For a low-country dweller like myself, this was quite an experience, particularly when we had to spend the first night in a hostel at the foot of the pass, which was blocked by snow. However, this was a good opportunity to talk to those involved in ecumenical youth work in Europe, and over the week some interesting discussions took place.

My greatest problem was that only having been involved in WSCF for a few weeks then (!), there were still some things I was not clear about - in particular the Latin project and EGGYS - and despite the Student Intern, Becky Brannan's, frantic faxing, I still felt uncomfortable about quite a lot of the things I was meant to know about. This was not too much of a problem in the end, I think, but I would have felt a lot happier had I had a bit more information.

I'm still not sure quite how EYCE actually operates - and from talking to other participants, that seemed to be fairly com-

mon. The conference theme, "Christ became poor for our sake", despite two excellent speakers, was quickly pushed aside in favour of business. Much of this was done in small working groups, who all produced a report. The problem with this is that no one aspect of an organisation exists on its own, and the groups had so little contact with each other that discussions were being duplicated, time was wasted, and people as resources were under-used. For instance, I joined the programme/camps working group, feeling it would probably be the most relevant, and had to spend a great deal of time trying to find out where other issues affecting WSCF were being dealt with. Despite having given my greeting on the first day, people were still coming up to me at the end of the week and saying, "Oh! We didn't realise there was anyone here from WSCF. We would have asked you about x or y ...". With virtually no central co-ordination, it all became very frustrating, a feeling shared by a large number of the participants.

The other very frustrating thing was the fact that nearly two days were taken up with constitutional

amendments (and amendments to amendments to amendments ...); given that only one and a half hours had been allowed for this, it meant that many of the reports were given only a cursory reading, and important business was delegated to the ExCo to deal with at a later date. I was left feeling "Why have I been here?", as WSCF-connected things were written off the agenda along with everything else.

As far as direct cooperation goes, the East Europe Project seems to be one of the more major things. EYCE have provisionally agreed to give SF10,000 to the project for each of the next two years - negotiable according to the input from WSCF, British SCM and Syndesmos. Despite getting some very negative comments from some people there, the project was not raised for discussion, but was just included on the programme listing. They have decided to postpone any possible team visits to Portugal or Spain until 1993-94, for financial reasons. Women's work did not come up, beyond an agreement to form an EYCE interim working group. Brazil (EGGYS) too was a side issue, and although the Prague working group came up with some interesting ideas, such as the

creation of a "monitoring group" with WSCF and Syndesmos, made up of 21 young people from different countries and denominations, this did not seem to be something I could comment on, as it will be taken to the next Council of European Churches (CEC) planning meeting for further discussion. Any cooperation in this area obviously seems to be a good thing.

So by and large, it was an interesting experience. I think, overall, that it was useful for WSCF Europe to have someone there, even if I had some doubts at the time! It made me realise the efficiency of our organisation, but as an outsider to EYCE, it made me very aware of the need for good communication and information, something as relevant to us as it is to them. I feel that they have some major problems with their structure and their overall aims, but as long as we can continue to have some mutually beneficial effect on each other it is a cooperation with which it seems to be worth continuing.

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## European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society September 1991: Brussels

# "The New Challenges of the European' Community"

At the beginning of September, I set off for Brussels to represent WSCF at a consultation of the EECCS. When I arrived at the hotel

where the Consultation was to take place, I was greeted by the General Secretary of EECCS, Keith Jenkins, with the words, "At a guess, you

must be Becky Brannan from WSCF." Little did I realise the significance of this remark. It was soon to become evident...

Having just spent two weeks at the European Regional Assembly at Hirschluch with an international group of students,