

On page 2 was an elephant, with its trunk raised.

TRUMPET CALL FOR HELP—will YOU answer it?

Bags of mail poured in and most letters contained contributions. "At one point, we had £10,000, in this very house," recalls Ian MacPhail, WWF's first paid employee and the man behind the *Daily Mirror* promotion. There were "dirty, ten-shilling notes," a donation from Winston Churchill (£50, MacPhail believes), contributions from pensioners and convicts; the letter MacPhail remembers best was from a woman who wrote, "I was saving up to buy a pair of shoes, but I think the elephants need it more." Nicholson and Scott had both thought that the most effective way to support the organization was with large donations from the wealthy, and Shell International and a millionaire London property owner, Jack Cotton, did donate £10,000 each. But the *Daily Mirror*, a liberal working-class newspaper, raised £30,000 (the equivalent today of £200,000, or more than \$350,000).

To attract donors, large and small, as well as media attention, Nicholson, Scott and the founding fathers of WWF wanted the royal family to lend their name. They approached Prince Philip to be president. Philip was an avid outdoorsman and hunter—in January 1961 he had bagged a Bengal tiger in India—and he and Queen Elizabeth had been to Kenya, on a safari best remembered because King George VI died while they were watching wild animals and Princess Elizabeth had become Queen. Scott sent Philip a draft of the proposed charter. Philip read it carefully, replying that one provision was "unctuous," and another "too wordy." This careful reading was not what Scott had expected. It is "a great bore that he suggests so much alteration," Scott wrote Nicholson. The founding fathers had wanted the Prince only as a figurehead. Philip agreed to head up the British chapter of WWF, but he turned down the presidency of the International and suggested his friend Prince Bernhard for the post. The men were alike in many ways. Both had been born into European royal families, but not very distinguished ones, and had acquired their status and string of titles when they married—Bernhard to the future Queen Juliana of the Netherlands. The two men were handsome, dashing, and staunchly conservative politically.

Scott, who liked consorting with royalty, made the pitch. "Prince Philip (who was sailing with me at Cowes in the 12 metre 'Sceptre' on Saturday) . . . told me that he was very keen that you should 'head-up' the international Trustees," Scott wrote to Bernhard. "Please may I ask

Your Royal Highness to say that you will be President of the Trustees of The World Wildlife Fund." Prince Bernhard eventually said yes, and he served as president until 1976, when he was forced to resign after it became public that he had solicited more than a million dollars in "commissions" from Lockheed in exchange for Lockheed's receiving contracts to build warplanes for the Netherlands. (At one point after the scandal broke, Bernhard said that he had intended to give the money from Lockheed to WWF; a member of the board at the time insists this is not true.)

Bernhard remained active behind the scenes in WWF, but a couple of years after he resigned, Philip became president of the International, and though it was thought he would serve for only a few years, he is still in power. The Prince is a committed conservationist and he undoubtedly has given prestige and visibility to WWF around the world. At the same time, however, many in the Third World have questioned whether he is the right person to head an organization that does most of its work in developing countries. At a meeting of the Commonwealth heads of state, most of them from the Third World and black, Philip said to an aide, "You wouldn't think the peace of the world rested on this lot, would you?" On another occasion, he referred to the Chinese as "slitty-eyed."

WWF WAS SET UP to raise money, but in spite of the initial successes, it did not prove very effective. Nicholson had said that \$1.5 million each year would be needed for conservation, which Scott thought he could easily raise; indeed, he anticipated coaxing \$25 million from the rich. Scott discovered that socializing with the elite was one thing, getting them to part with their money quite another, and it was several years before the total of WWF's revenues reached \$1 million.

WWF's financial fortunes began to change dramatically after a hard-driving South African businessman, Anton Rupert, joined the board. An Afrikaner from the Cape, Rupert had already made millions as the owner of Rothmans International tobacco company, the foundation of the Rembrandt Group, his wholly owned business empire. When Rupert expanded beyond South Africa, he bought Dunhill and Cartier, and eventually he became one of the richest men in South Africa, rivaled only by Harry Oppenheimer, the gold and diamond industrialist. Rupert had long been interested in conservation, including the restoration of historic buildings, and in 1968 he joined the WWF board of trustees; he

stayed on the board for twenty-two years, in spite of a provision in the organization's original incorporation documents that limited members to two three-year terms, a provision that was routinely ignored for the benefit of several other influential members of the board as well. Rupert brought a considerable amount of his own money to WWF, but, more important, he conceived a plan that would raise millions.

Rupert's idea was the "1001 Club." The "one" was Prince Bernhard. The other one thousand were wealthy individuals who could be persuaded to part with \$10,000. The one-time donation brings lifetime membership, and the names of the generous patrons are kept secret by the organization. According to these secret lists, American givers have included August A. Busch, Jr., of the beer company; Henry Ford II; Peter Grace; Nelson Bunker Hunt, the silver trader; Mrs. Geoffrey Kent, of Abercrombie & Kent; Robert S. McNamara; Cyril Magnin; Lew Wasserman, of MCA; Thomas Watson, of IBM. Many of the donors understandably wish to remain anonymous (in part to avoid being badgered by other charities), but it is also understandable why WWF does not want the list made public. It has included many less-savory individuals—Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko, one of the most corrupt leaders in Africa; Daniel K. Ludwig, the reclusive American billionaire, whose companies destroyed thousands of miles of the Amazon rain forest; Agha Hasan Abedi, the founder of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI); Robert Vesco, the financier who fled the United States in the 1970s to escape trial on charges of fraud, embezzlement and obstruction of justice; Tibor Rosenbaum, founder of a Swiss bank that laundered billions of dollars of organized crime money and who was accused of embezzling Israeli deposits in the bank; Thomas Jones, who was forced out as chief executive of Northrop after it was revealed that the company paid \$30 million in bribes to government officials and agents around the world in exchange for contracts; Lord Kagan, a British businessman convicted of theft and conspiracy to defraud the British tax service; a Norwegian shipowner convicted of taking a £1 million bribe; an individual who was the conduit for the money from Lockheed to Prince Bernhard.

There has been another remarkable feature about the 1001 Club—the number of South Africans. On the 1989 list, at least sixty individuals were from South Africa, including seven of Rupert's relatives. Many were also members of the Broederbond, the secret, conservative Afrikaaner society that has traditionally wielded immense political power in South Africa. Only five countries had more donors, and as a percentage of their popula-

tion, South African whites had three hundred times as many members as the United States. It is easy to understand why so many South Africans have been willing to part with \$10,000 to join the 1001, and not all of it has to do with conservation. Not many international clubs welcomed white South Africans, and membership in the 1001 provided them an opportunity to mingle and do business with tycoons, as well as with Prince Philip and Prince Bernhard. What else they may have gained from the membership is unknown, in part because so much of what WWF-International does is kept from the public and even from the organization's own trustees. Because of the secrecy and closed nature of the WWF club, it is also difficult to know the extent of the influence that so much South African money has had on the organization's conservation work. There can be little doubt, however, that WWF-International's initial opposition to the ivory ban reflected South African power on the board—South Africa was adamantly opposed to the ban, because its elephants were not being poached and it made money from selling ivory.

One place where South Africa's clout has been felt is in the office of the director-general, the man who runs WWF. Since 1977 that man has been Charles de Haes. Much of de Haes's past is vague, which seems to be by design: he has chosen to reveal very little about his background and some of what the organization does say publicly about him is at odds with the facts. On WWF's public list of officers and trustees, de Haes is identified as being from Belgium, and he was born there, in 1938. But as a young boy, he moved with his family to South Africa. After graduating from Cape Town University with a law degree, he got a job with Rothmans International, Rupert's tobacco company. De Haes's official résumé—that is, the one WWF distributes—makes a point of noting that he went to work for the tobacco company "although himself a non-smoker." It then says de Haes "helped establish companies" in Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. What it does not say is that these were companies that sold cigarettes. Maybe de Haes didn't smoke, but he made money by encouraging others to do so.

De Haes was brought to WWF through the back door by Anton Rupert in 1971. He was first assigned to be personal assistant to Prince Bernhard. One of his tasks was to implement the 1001 Club project. He was tremendously successful. Ten thousand dollars was worth even more back then, yet it took de Haes only three years to find one thousand donors. Prince Bernhard provided the letters of introduction, but de Haes was the salesman who clinched the deals. Even de Haes's fiercest critics—and

they are many—use the word “brilliant” when describing his fund-raising skills.

In 1975, with the backing of Rupert and Prince Philip, de Haes was named joint director-general of WWF, and two years later he had the top position to himself. De Haes had no education or experience in conservation, other than his few years at WWF, yet he was now in charge of the most prestigious and influential conservation organization in the world. It was a position that would have appealed to the most qualified and eminent individuals in the field, yet no effort was made to recruit any of them.

WWF may have taken on someone without conservation experience, but then, it cost the organization nothing: Rupert agreed to pay de Haes's salary—which, according to a British trustee, goes far in explaining why de Haes got the job. WWF never said at the time that Rupert was paying de Haes, and it still tries to conceal this fact. The organization's chief spokesman, Robert SanGeorge, stated emphatically during an interview in 1991 that de Haes had not been seconded from Rothmans to Prince Bernhard and WWF during the early years. But an internal WWF memorandum signed by the organization's executive vice-president in 1975 talks specifically about “Mr. de Haes's period of secondment to WWF.” What this means, of course, is that de Haes was still employed by a South African corporation while working for WWF. “I thought it was a scandal,” says a former board member from North America, who added that it was only by accident that he learned that Rupert was paying de Haes. This board member did not like the arrangement. “Who does the director-general serve? Is the interest of a South African tobacco company synonymous with the world conservation movement?” Even more troubling to this director was the fact that it was kept a secret. “If it was such a good thing, why weren't they willing to say so in the annual report?”

In a similar vein, the organization treats as a state secret the question of who paid de Haes after he became director-general. It was “an anonymous donor,” SanGeorge says. Even board members have been in the dark. When on occasion one asked, he was told that the donor wished to remain anonymous.

It is unlikely that any other charitable organization that depends on public support operates with such little accountability and in such secrecy as WWF has under de Haes. It is easier to penetrate the CIA. And when WWF has been caught in embarrassing conduct, it has engaged in

damage control and cover-ups of the kind that might be expected from a company whose products have caused injury to consumers or the environment. Under rules de Haes promulgated, WWF employees are prohibited from talking to anyone outside the organization about anything except what the organization has already made public; the obligation to secrecy binds the employee even after he or she has left WWF. Few are willing to break this code of silence—given their fear of de Haes and, in the case of current employees, the generous salaries and pleasant living conditions in Switzerland.

It may well be, as one senior WWF officer put it somewhat defensively, that a dollar given to WWF is still a dollar well spent for conservation. But, as this person added, “imagine what the organization could be with better leadership.”

Over the years there has been increasing dissatisfaction with de Haes's leadership. One of the most serious challenges to his rule came in the early 1980s, when the heads of the WWF organizations in Britain, the Netherlands and Switzerland began to discuss among themselves changes they thought were necessary in the organization. These organizations should be able to effect change because they provide most of the funds for the International—WWF-UK alone contributes nearly one-third of the International's budget, and Switzerland and the Netherlands rank second and third. The way WWF was set up, two-thirds of the money raised by the national organizations goes to the International, while one-third remains with the national organization. The “dissident” leaders of the three national organizations objected to this because there was no accountability over how the International spent the money. They also did not like the fact that the WWF-International board of trustees doesn't represent the national organizations. The board is a self-selected body—that is, those on the board decide whom to place on it—and the national organizations, even though they give the money, have no right of representation. In short, the heads of the British, Dutch and Swiss organizations felt that too much power was concentrated in Gland—the Swiss town where WWF-International's headquarters is located—and that the local organizations should have more autonomy.

Sir Arthur Norman, the head of WWF-UK at the time, was particularly disturbed by the manner in which WWF-International set up chapters in other countries. He thought they should “be triggered off by local people, local enthusiasm, and not by someone in Gland saying it's time

to set up one in China and then finding the people to run it." He describes the difference in approach as "imperial corporate rule versus liberal grass roots development." Norman was one of Britain's most successful businessmen—for more than twenty years chairman of the De La Rue Company, which printed currency certificates, and an early president of the Confederation of British Industries (CBI), Britain's most powerful business association.

Sir Arthur was the person who convened the meetings with the leaders from the Netherlands and Switzerland. "It was these meetings that angered de Haes," says one of them. "The idea that parts of the whole should talk with each other and not with the center—Gland—was not acceptable to him." Norman says that he and the other directors were not after de Haes personally—the "struggle was one of ideas." They knew, however, that de Haes would be unwilling to make the changes, to surrender power, so that if the changes were made, de Haes would have to go. De Haes had an important ally: Prince Philip. Philip spoke to Norman; de Haes remained as head of WWF-International. Norman gave up his reform campaign, and the organization continued to operate as it always had. "It still has the same patronizing approach," says one former WWF board member who sided with Norman. "It is run like a private country club." Not even the United States chapter of WWF, which has more members and raises more money than nearly all of the other national organizations combined, has been able to budge de Haes and Philip.

Even though American conservationists had initially been cool to Nicholson's idea, once WWF was a reality, they were quick to get on board. The launching of WWF-US was a black-tie dinner, on June 7, 1962, in the Grand Ballroom of New York's Waldorf-Astoria. President Kennedy lent his name to the cause—as honorary chairman of the dinner. The dinner committee was chaired by Winston Guest, the socialite who had been disappointed because Beryl Markham had not been able to find him a hundred-pounder to shoot. An international polo player—his teammates included King George VI—Guest was the godson and second cousin of Winston Churchill, and his grandfather on his mother's side, an American, had been a partner of Andrew Carnegie. It was a major social event—the *New York Times* even put it on the front page, with a picture of Prince Philip and Prince Bernhard, who flew over for the gala. One thousand five hundred persons paid \$50 (roughly \$1,000 today) to attend. Among the socialites, the politicians and the merely wealthy who

dined off Wedgwood plates depicting African wildlife, specially made for the occasion, were Bernard Baruch, Nicholas Duke Biddle, Henry F. du Pont, William Randolph Hearst, Jr., Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney, Mrs. M. de Kuyper, Dr. Baron Stefan de Schill, Marshall Field, Jr., Senator Jacob Javits, Paul Mellon, William Paley, Richard Scaife. The drawings on the large-size program with gilded letters were by Peter Scott, and the program noted (in a sign that those were different times), "The Brown and Williamson Tobacco Corporation have been kind enough to provide their Viceroy Cigarettes."

Until the mid-1970s, WWF-US remained a modest organization. It did not have a staff of scientists or conservationists and was in effect a foundation that gave money to individuals and other groups. Then Russell Train became president, in 1978. He set about building an empire, merging WWF with The Conservation Foundation, a mainline organization that had been founded in 1948, and launching a joint fund-raising scheme with his former organization, AWLF, the first step in what he hoped would be a takeover, but which eventually failed. Train brought scientists and fund-raisers into WWF-US and membership rose from fewer than 50,000 when he arrived to more than 300,000 when he stepped down as president in 1985 to become chairman. It was almost inevitable that WWF-US and the International would collide, that the Americans would not tolerate being the child of a Swiss parent.

Conservation projects in the field were supposed to be run out of Switzerland, but the Americans wanted to conduct their own. When WWF-US launched its own programs in Latin America, the International reluctantly acceded to a kind of Monroe Doctrine of conservation. But under Train, the Americans also expanded into Africa and Asia without asking the International or even caring much what the International thought. During one meeting of WWF-International's executive committee, at the Gland, Switzerland, headquarters in April 1990, a WWF vice-president complained that WWF-US was too independent, that it "continued to make decisions which came as surprises to WWF International" and that it hired field staff in Asia and Africa without prior consultation with Gland. According to the confidential minutes, Train replied that WWF-US "was not willing to take directives from Gland."

Even more contentious, not surprisingly, was the matter of money. WWF-US has never gone along with passing on to the International two-thirds of the money it raises, as the other national organizations do. In part this is because of U.S. tax laws, but the U.S. organization has not

even been willing to give to the International what the tax laws permit. By 1991 the International said the American chapter owed \$3 million; the Americans agreed to give no more than \$700,000. "In principle we are not opposed to giving more money to the International," a senior WWF-US official said. "But we will not put one dime into the International until there is a system of financial accountability and a control of expenditures. There is absolutely no accountability." A man who served on the WWF board for more than a decade during the seventies and eighties, and who is not from the United States, agrees. "It is not accountable," he says of WWF-International. "Its financial accounts are not subject to the same examination as they would be in, say, the United States. It's really a club that is not democratically representative of its constituency nor accountable to it."

The feud between WWF-US and the International was out of public view, but by 1991 it had become a bitter one. The Americans threatened to leave the International; the International countered by threatening to expel them. It was like a messy and acrimonious divorce proceeding. At issue were the panda and the WWF name. The International said that if the American chapter left the International, it could not use the panda and the WWF name; the Americans said they had rights to both. The International retained a prominent American lawyer, Abraham Sofaer, who had been the senior State Department attorney during part of the Reagan administration, and it took delight in keeping the hiring secret from Train and WWF-US for several months.

There were high-level transatlantic negotiations, often involving Prince Philip and Russell Train—inherited royalty versus democratic aristocracy. They were appropriately civil to each other, but the animosity was deep. "He seems to have nothing better to do than pester us," Train once remarked about Philip, referring to the perpetual flow of faxes from Buckingham Palace to the modern WWF offices on Twenty-fourth Street in Washington, D.C. As for de Haes, Train described him as being consumed with power. "He has an instinct for the jugular," Train has said. "No one here [at WWF-US] trusts that guy at all." During the WWF-International executive committee meeting at Gland in April 1990, Train sought to curb de Haes's power. In a closed session of the executive committee—closed at Train's request—Train suggested that in the future the director-general should have only a one-year contract, instead of a three-year contract as had been the practice. The executive committee, chaired by Prince Philip, rejected the proposal. A year later,

in July 1991, Train told Philip politely but firmly that he thought de Haes should leave. He had been encouraged to take this action by Sir Arthur Norman—not that he needed any prodding. Like Norman, Train lost. "If he goes, I go," Prince Philip said of de Haes. "Some of us felt, 'That's fine, too,'" recalled a senior WWF-US official. De Haes and Prince Philip stayed.

In early 1992 the International and the United States chapter signed an agreement that will keep the two organizations working together—however inharmoniously—until 1994, when both sides fully expect the battle will be rejoined, though perhaps without as much personal animosity.

At the WWF meeting in November 1992, in Buenos Aires, de Haes was finally ousted. Trying to put the best face on it, WWF-International issued a press release saying that de Haes had announced he would "retire." In truth, he had been forced out. The successful coup was led by the British, Dutch and Swiss national organizations, and at one point they had several other signatures on a letter they were circulating calling for de Haes to be dismissed. "On Monday, he was told he'd be fired on Friday," said a senior WWF-US official. "He headed it off with his resignation." Still, de Haes was given eighteen months before his resignation would become effective—on June 30, 1994. Many national organizations thought that was far too long, but once again de Haes had Prince Philip's support, and Philip continued to irritate the Americans.

With the announcement of de Haes's "retirement," a formal search began for his successor. One of the early prime candidates was William Reilly, who has had a long and distinguished career in conservation, including sixteen years as president of WWF-US, from 1973 to 1989, and who served as head of the Environmental Protection Agency during the Bush administration. But Reilly's chances were jeopardized by Prince Philip's opposition. "Philip considers him an uppity American who can't stand royalty, who is not sufficiently deferential," said a WWF-US official who has worked with Philip. Whoever is the next head of WWF-International will have to devote considerable time to repairing some of the damage of the past.

IN 1987, someone decided that it was time to take a look at WWF-International on its twenty-fifth birthday. The organization refuses to say who asked for the evaluation, but it was the sagacious Anton Rupert