

## SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

### Questions And Answers With The Chairmen Of FWBO Centres At Their Annual General Meeting Held In 1986

**Those Present:** Sangharakshita, and (in order of appearance) Tejananda, Abhaya, Mangala, Sona, Susiddhi, Devamitra, Devaraja, Kamalasila, Suvajra

#### **14th August 1986**

**Tejananda:** What we've got for you this evening, Bhante, we've divided into groups and discussed the areas which we've followed for the last few days. I've got six areas tonight which questions came out of. So the first area which we're dealing with is the Chairmen's Meeting and senior Order members. The first question is from Abhaya about senior Order members' personal development.

**Abhaya:** In discussion the other evening Subhuti expressed his fear that as a result of having taken on a lot of responsibility over the years certain areas of his personal development had been neglected or left behind and he thought this may well be a more general problem in the case of senior, responsible Order members. Do you have any observations or views on this?

**Sangharakshita:** I wonder what the senior and responsible Order members themselves as a whole feel, especially the Chairmen. One mustn't jump to conclusions. One needs to gather one's data first perhaps. So does anyone express any opinion? Do you all heartily agree with Subhuti, disagree with him or was the nature of the different areas identified?

**Abhaya:** The general opinion was that in most cases it seemed to be in the reporting in that a lot of us did not experience this, that whatever areas of development we still need to work on were not necessarily as a result of having taken on too much responsibility. Though I wouldn't say that that was in every case so maybe others could....

**Mangala:** Just following on from what Abhaya said actually my impression was quite the contrary, that most chairmen seem to feel it. Actually having been chairmen helped them to develop themselves rather than leave areas behind. Perhaps some areas were left behind but the general feeling seemed to be that it had actually helped them to develop.

**S:** It must be borne in mind of course that in Subhuti's case he isn't a chairman in the ordinary sense, and is in many ways in a much more difficult position than even chairmen usually are. Mainly because he has so many different things, often quite important, to attend to or become involved with, most of which just don't hang together, as it were. It's quite a large number of relatively big pieces that he's having to deal with and that does constitute a difficulty. I would agree that the taking on of responsibility is in itself a means of development. I think most chairmen have actually developed at least in certain respects as a result of being chairmen.

But was there general agreement with regard to areas that chairmen in particular say, or senior and responsible Order members, and a high percentage of those are chairmen, were more likely to neglect or overlook, or not have time for, than others?

**Tejananda:** I think to some extent one area was meditation.

**S:** But is this problem, if it is a problem, specific to senior and responsible Order members or is a general problem that affects all Order members or all mitras for that matter, who are engaged in some kind of, let us say, practical activity or organisational activity? Is it something that is peculiar just to the senior and responsible people?

**Sona:** As I understood it what Subhuti was trying to say was that because of the position of being chairman and as the most experienced person around the centre, one was in a position of receiving the sort of criticism that would be very helpful. Often one gets criticism but not the right sort of criticism to help one to see what areas one needs to bear in mind. I thought that was his main thrust.

**S:** I think this is very much a point because as a chairman, constitutions notwithstanding, he's in a very strong position in his centre, and in his council is usually looked up to and deferred to by others to quite a considerable extent. And this may mean, and I'm sure it does sometimes mean that the chairman is not sufficiently challenged. I don't mean to say that he should be challenged regularly in council meetings - that would be rather boring and would hold things up - but perhaps not sufficiently challenged as a person, as an individual. In other words only too often, and I know this happens, he carries over his chairman's hat, so to speak, even into say chapter meetings. It's as though even in the chapter meetings he is still chairman of the centre which is quite inappropriate. I think this is perhaps an area in which senior and responsible Order members and chairmen in particular have to be very careful, that they do open themselves to genuinely positive - whether critical or appreciative - feedback from fellow Order members and they don't start unconsciously standing on or sheltering behind or taking refuge in, their position, their organisational position as chairman. And I think the larger the centre, perhaps the more likely this is to happen. Because the larger the centre, in a manner of speaking, the more powerful you are as chairman.

So I think senior and responsible Order members need to watch this. There's the classic story of Sariputta who was once walking along somewhere and he allowed his robe to drag on the ground which is against the Vinaya, and a seven year old samanera at once pointed it out and he turned round and thanked him. This has been regarded as a sort of model for that sort of situation. You mustn't turn around and say 'who are you to find fault with a chairman'?

Any other areas?

**Tejananda:** Another question on an area related to this from Susiddhi. The Order Office and senior Order members.

**Susiddhi:** A couple of years ago the idea of the Order Office as a collection of experienced Order members living and working with yourself was put forward. Would that fully fledged Order Office be the ideal link and executive for the chapter convenors' meeting, the mitra convenors' meeting and chairmen's meeting?

**S:** I can't say that I find that very easy to answer but I would say that I think I myself would find it a much more valuable situation and useful situation and, in a way, helpful situation to be in, because one of the things I've noticed in connection with the Order Office is that obviously I'm working with people in the Order Office. They see quite a lot of me. Those who are actually doing my secretarial work see me every day unflinching, including Saturdays and Sundays. We've always got something

on hand, there's always something we're concerned with, dealing with, discussing. There's always some little crisis or other to sort out. But what I've noticed is that in the case of people who over the years have worked in the Order Office, and especially perhaps lately when they've tended to stay longer, though to begin with there hasn't been much of a personal contact or personal communication, through that sort of day to day, even as it were organisational contact, I definitely get to know them quite well. Better than I know other people, and they also get to know me well, in the sense that they get to know my way of looking at things, my way of approaching things, my way of handling things, and in that way I can say with regard to almost anybody who works in the Order Office for a certain length of time, a certain rapport develops which does not develop in the case of people I don't work with in that way, even though I may happen to like those other people quite a lot. But that sort of rapport doesn't develop. It only develops in that sort of situation of working together and, in the case of the Order Office situation, yes I'm very much working with people. I've certainly noticed this.

So clearly it would ideally be best if I develop that sort of rapport with more experienced people rather than with less experienced people, but I don't know whether it's possible for any of those people to join, whether they'd want to, whether they'd feel too cramped or maybe they'd feel that they didn't have their own, as it were, little kingdom any longer. Some people, in Caesar's words, would rather be the first man in a village than a second man in Rome! [Laughter] There is that. They might feel that in the Order Office their style might be a bit cramped as it were. But yes, in some ways I was originally hoping that some of the more senior Order members would gather around but that hasn't happened. The notable exception being Subhuti. Even Subhuti has to be, as it were, seconded for other purposes so often. It's a long time since he did any actual secretarial work for me. Because there are so few people available and willing in the Movement that very often Subhuti has to take on things which really somebody else in the Movement ought to be doing, but there's nobody else apparently. So that's my comment on that. I certainly have developed a rapport with the people I've worked with in the Order Office and it hasn't happened in any other way, that kind of rapport as I've called it, not even on a retreat. Perhaps that can give one food for thought, food for reflection.

Another point I must make is that when I say work with people in the Order Office in that way it isn't that it's as it were purely organisational. In a sense it is, but in the very context of that, as it were, organisational work, and you could say that no work for the FWBO is purely organisational, within that organisational context all sorts of spiritual questions arise in a really live sort of way. The particular person is brought up against perhaps certain personal difficulties, imitations and I can then see those, he can see them or I can point them out to him and we can then talk about them and they can be resolved. That also happens in that sort of situation. So it's definitely a situation in which people can develop, if they can stand it at all because it isn't an easy situation being in the Order Office, not by any means. I know some people in the Movement think of it as having your hands on the levers of power but I can assure you it's not like that at all! Usually for the person working in the Order Office it means being at the receiving end of quite a lot of stick more often than not. This is one of the things that really surprised me over the years and months - what a lot of stick quite innocent people working in the Order Office do come in for in one way or another.

**Susiddhi:** One of things I was thinking was that the chapters, chapter convenors, national Order weekends and the chairmen's meeting or the council are very good consultative arrangements, but they aren't so good on the executive side. I was just wondering.....

**S:** I'm well aware of this because I have to get things done through them and I'm well aware of those sort of deficiencies. I don't want to frighten them with too much organisational structure, you see.

Some people tend to resist that. If you for instance think of the Chapter Convenors, the Chapter Fathers, I've made it clear that I'd like them to get together every national Order weekend. Last national Order weekend there were five, including Aloka, so that doesn't suggest that they're very keen to get together or that it's very easy, so to speak, to organise them. The previous national Order weekend when I talked with them myself we had I think thirteen or fourteen - the one before that - but this last one there were only five including Aloka and Prasannasiddhi was on the premises anyway. So that wasn't very good.

**Tejananda:** Devamitra has a question about restructuring the chairmen's meeting.

**Devamitra:** This isn't so much a question as a proposal that we put forward and were unable to come to any conclusions about. A bit of background. Originally presumably the purpose of the chairmen's meeting was twofold; it was a meeting of the chairmen of centres and it also was a meeting of senior Order members.

**S:** Meeting in the sense of an opportunity to get together and get to know one another better. It was my thinking at the time that the chairmen, being as it were the cream of the senior and responsible people, just needed to know one another better. They didn't seem to know one another particularly well at that time, nor in some cases even to like one another very much. They certainly didn't seem over keen on getting together, but I gather over the years things have improved quite considerably and I believe some of you at least rather love one another which is quite nice to see or to hear. But anyway that was my thinking at the beginning.

**Devamitra:** Presumably part of the purpose of this was to give some kind of leadership for the Movement as a whole?

**S:** I'm not so sure that I thought in terms of leadership. No, I would say not. I think it would be a little bit dangerous if leadership passed just into the hands of the chairmen. I think one has to remember the chairmen just represent, if that is the word, the centres. In addition to the centres there are co-ops, there are communities, there are Order members not very actively involved with centres, there are the chapters. So I don't think I would say that I was thinking of the chairmen as giving a lead to the whole Movement. I think that would be - what shall I say? - giving undue weight not just to the chairmen but to the FWBOs as distinct from the Order as such and its chapters. I had more in mind that the chairmen should discuss matters of common concern and perhaps agree on certain common measures or approaches with regard to the centres. Maybe that's what you're really referring to, but not that the chairmen as such should give a lead to the Movement in the sense of giving a lead to the Order. Do you see what I mean? But you are gathering as chairmen primarily, aren't you.

**Devamitra:** Do you think there is any need for a body of Order members who would be able to give leadership to the Movement as a whole or do you think not?

**S:** Well inasmuch as I'm not going to be around forever I think there is no doubt a need for such a body but I think it would be rather jumping to conclusions to identify it with the chairmen collectively. I'm trying at present to encourage the chapter convenors to meet together, and again yes there are the mitra convenors. I think eventually we need to have a sort of representative body - this is a tentative thinking aloud - maybe some chairmen, some chapter convenors, possibly some mitra convenors and maybe two or three other ex-officio people to form a small body that would give a lead if required. I'm not so sure that it should be done just by the chairmen.

**Devamitra:** Well actually the proposal that I was putting forward was that there should be two levels within this meeting or a meeting of chairmen, a meeting of the chairmen of FWBOs as distinct from a meeting of senior Order members, some of whom may also be chairmen of FWBO centres, simply as a means of giving quite a strong focus to a body of experience which there just doesn't seem to be a forum for at the moment.

**S:** Yes, I think you're right, yes. Whether that's the way to do it is another question. I think it might be a better idea perhaps to have a forum consisting of let's say representative chairmen plus representative chapter convenors plus a few other people, but my thinking here is quite tentative. I know that this is one of the things that I have to get around to thinking about but I need to talk with Subhuti who is one of the most experienced in this field and who seems to have the best ideas usually, but he's not even available to talk to. These days I have to wait. We have discussed this already that he comes back to Padmaloka next year. There's quite a lot of things of this sort we have to put our heads together about.

**Devamitra:** But fundamentally that was the idea that we were discussing. You're not in a position to comment on that.

**S:** Not really. I won't say that I'm against it. I'm certainly not against it and it might be a good idea, but I can't really say anything more definite than that at the moment. It would be good no doubt to encourage other senior and responsible Order members who are not chairmen to perhaps take on more active responsibility, at least to the extent of contributing their views or suggestions. I hope that doesn't sound too vague or non-committal.

**Tejananda:** Devaraja has a question on the mitra and chapter convenors meetings.

**Devaraja:** It seems to me that this question actually has partly been answered by things you've suggested so far but I'll go through them anyway to see if there's any more mileage in them. Until now the chairmen's meeting has been the forum for senior and responsible Order members to consider issues affecting the Movement. Is it your intention that the mitra convenor's and chapter convenor's meetings should in the longer term do likewise and that some of the issues often considered by the chairmen should become more specifically the province of the mitra and chapter convenors? For example the state of the Order is an example of such an issue.

**S:** Of course it must be borne in mind that chapter convenors are not necessarily either senior or responsible. It isn't necessary that they should be, at least not at present, because I have emphasised that they are more or less just postmen. Channels of communication between myself, usually via Aloka, and the other members of the chapter. Their responsibility is just to convey messages, requests, make sure that things are discussed and that the results of the discussion are transmitted to me. It's keeping me in touch basically with the Order as such. So in a way inasmuch as they are more or less just postmen, the chapter convenors aren't really analogous to the chairmen. It could be that that they become so in time but I think most of the existing chapter convenors have taken on that little responsibility more or less on the understanding that they wouldn't be asked to do anything more than that.

In the case of mitra convenors they are obviously a bit more senior and responsible on the whole and it might be possible to involve them more than is the case at present. They do have their own meeting anyway under Devamitra's chairmanship and that seems to be working reasonably well. (*break*)

Apropos the chapter convenors, I was thinking of getting them all together fairly early next year for a study retreat, partly as a means of just getting to know them all better and in that way through them establishing a better contact and better communication with the chapters so that the whole machinery would be oiled a little as it were. It has taken sometimes months and months to get replies from at least some chapters to the questions which I've asked the chapters to discuss. The first time we tried that particular procedure I think it took Aloka seven months to get back all the replies. Really quite dreadful. Talking about Britain, not the whole world.

**Tejananda:** Another one from Abhaya on micchaditthis as regards to the chairmen's meeting.

**S:** Ah! Among the chairmen themselves or..... [Laughter]

**Abhaya:** I think there may be a certain amount of overlap again. I'll ask it just in case. I have the impression that some Order members still think that the Movement is controlled and directed by the chairmen's meeting. Do you think that the basic principle that Order matters are decided by general consensus is sufficiently understood by the Order at large? I personally feel it needs to be stressed and spelt out very clearly either via *Shabda* or chapter convenors. Do you agree?

**S:** I have noticed in a lot of people in the movement and no doubt this includes Order members, an over-reaction to anything that to them smacks of authority or authoritarianism, and I think for some Order members at least it's very easy to see the chairmen collectively as a sort of governing body, almost as a sort of *politburo* or something of that sort. But this is of course entirely wrong and, yes as you say, Order matters should be decided by the Order. We don't have any sort of representative body, so we have to consult in true democratic style, in a way, the Order as a whole and we can only do that by canvassing them or having a referendum via the chapter convenors or chapter fathers and perhaps it is quite significant that there has been in the past such a poor and slow response when the chapters have been asked to discuss certain matters. To some extent it suggests a bad state of affairs in the chapter as such anyway. Some chapters don't meet regularly enough to discuss things properly it seems, but also it suggests that the members of the chapters don't realise that here they have an opportunity to have a voice, to influence things. It seems almost as though they're unwilling to take advantage of that opportunity. Sometimes I wonder well do some of them perhaps just look to the chairmen to settle and decide everything for them.

On the other hand, in the case of such people sometimes you may find that even though they expect others to decide for them, they also resent others deciding for them. So it's not an easy situation but I did decide some years ago, a few years ago to set up these chapter convenors partly to restore the balance a bit between the FWBOs as represented by the chairmen so to speak on the one hand, and the Order on the other. So this is a great imbalance at present.

**Abhaya:** Do you think it's helped at all?

**S:** Oh yes. Something is happening and we're working on it all the time. I hope I will be able to get together with the chapter convenors for a retreat and I hope that that will help.

**Dhammarati:** I'm quite new to this meeting and I'm not so familiar with the way the decision making process proceeds from this meeting. I think that a lot of misunderstanding of the chapters, a lot of the suspicion of the chapters and even a lot of the inertia of the chapters comes so much not from bloody mindedness but a lack of understanding about how decisions are made.

**S:** What decisions are you referring to?

**Dhammarati:** For instance any issue that the Order's consulted about in the sense the (39 proposals that (?) ) the mitra convenors meeting. I think that very few Order members in the chapters have got an experience of quite how ( ) who really fully understand the process. First of all by which that committee is called together, two ( ) should make ( ) recommendations, what will happen to any response they make, and how that response is considered and acted upon in the future. And I think that lack of understanding to some extent acts as a break in their enthusiasm.

**S:** But it is of course open to them to ask and to find out. Of course this ties up with a wider issue but again one of those issues that Subhuti and I are going to put our heads together about, and that is with regard to a sort of constitution for the Order. I feel that we've come to a stage where we need a sort of constitution and I think that would make all such things clear. But basically the position is that, with regard to spiritual matters concerning the Order as a whole, what happens is that I consult as many people as I can. I try on certain issues to consult the Order as a whole and know what everybody is thinking, and then I think all that over, relate that to my own experience and perception of things, the basic principles of Buddhism, what the Order is supposed to be doing, and then I come to a final conclusion and let everybody know. This is what happens. Because we aren't democratically structured in the sense that we just do things by everybody's vote, because there is a sort of spiritual hierarchy at the same time. You see what I mean? So I firstly try to follow a middle way between just myself deciding everything in a sort of dictatorial fashion and then letting everybody know what I've decided on the one hand, and on the other just allowing everybody to vote on issues and we follow that.

So yes I take the final decision, though purely organisational things I'm usually happy to leave to others. I take the final decision where any spiritual matter is concerned, Order matters are concerned, but only after I've sounded out everybody, because one has to make sure that everybody understands the issue. I have to make sure that everybody is ready for a certain development that I have in mind. It may be a perfectly good one but perhaps people aren't ready for it or perhaps find it difficult to understand it.

So it's not enough for me just to come to a certain conclusion. I have to carry people along with me. That means they have to understand my thinking or understand what is involved. I'm hoping to do that more and more through the chapters via the chapter convenors, but they've got off to a very slow start. But anyway things have started moving a little bit.

But I don't want the chairmen's meeting to be a forum for discussing matters which concern the whole Order as a such.

**Tejananda:** Now we move onto another area. The image of the FWBO. A question from Saddhaloka regarding comments from Stephen Bachelor with regard to our image.

**Saddhaloka:** Advayacitta reported a conversation with Stephen Bachelor at a recent conference in Britain. Stephen Bachelor commented that people in the Buddhist world, himself included, were finding themselves wondering what the FWBO are up to at times. He referred specifically to the 'Old Net for New Monsters' and Subhuti's treatment of Gerald Dupre which he seemed to think was 'over the top', though he clearly indicated that he thought Gerald was well 'off beam'. Could you spell out for us what we are up to in taking the sort of approach we do to other groups, and why we need sometimes to go 'over the top' at least in the eyes of other Buddhists.

**S:** I think it's quite simple. You can't make clear what Buddhism is and what we, as Buddhists, stand for, unless you also make it clear what we don't stand for and what we are not. I think the second half, the as it were negative part of that is something that Buddhists in Britain at least have always shrunk from. But in taking this attitude we are being fully traditional. It mustn't be forgotten, as I think Subhuti pointed out, the Pali Tipitika itself begins with the Brahmajala Sutta where the Buddha deals with the sixty two false views and he gets those all out of the way before he starts preaching the Dharma. That is at least how the arrangers of that material saw him.

I wouldn't like to say, to generalise, what sort of an image we have in the Buddhist world, because you mustn't forget the greater part of the Buddhist world still hasn't heard of the FWBO. One mustn't think that just a few people in England representing certain groups are the Buddhist world. I do know that in many parts of the East we have a very positive image indeed, that the 'Newsletter' wherever it goes gives people a very positive picture of the FWBO and that they're greatly impressed by that. We mustn't forget that.

I sometimes think we don't go 'over the top' enough. I'm sure I don't! Sometimes I'm utterly appalled by things that happen in the Buddhist world, including even in Britain but I don't really say very much, I certainly don't say much in writing. I sometimes comment in the course of seminars but I really am appalled sometimes. And that's just part of a larger picture. There's a lot of things in the world that really do appal me but it seems you can't frankly say what you think sometimes in peril of your life.

**Dhammarati:** When we discussed this topic the discussion got quite specific and one of the points that was made was that it wasn't so much a question of principles but tactics, and in a way Subhuti's writing was held up as some of the most provocative. Subhuti in a way is the person who most often takes issue with other British groups. A number of people in the group, myself included, felt that they agreed with the issues but they didn't completely agree with the sort of combative style in the writing and that a contrast was made with some of the writing in the 'Outlook' section of the last couple of 'Golden Drum's ( ) in two of these letters which is critical but walks quite a fine line between criticising and affirming. Making its point without completely writing off the people it criticises. So some of the discussion was sort of making that distinction. It's possible to criticise without actually.....

**S:** My fear is in the case of say Nagabodhi's writing in particular, because he wrote those comments, that you make the point so nicely that the point is lost. I think that is also a danger. I've certainly found this myself even within the Movement, maybe not the Order, let's just say within the Movement, that I've made a point, made it nicely, and people have not realised what I was talking about or the point that I was making. So I think one has to bear that in mind too. Also bear in mind that as we get bigger we do attract not only more attention but at least a bit more hostility and there are apparently some very sensitive people in the Buddhist world.

**Nagabodhi:** You say that's your fear about my writing. Do you think that's actually the case that I'm writing too nicely?

**S:** Well probably. Yes, I'll wait and see but on the whole I think your writing does tend to be - yes I think there's that danger - you're so nice or making the point so nicely the point may not get home.

**Nagabodhi:** ..... wait and see. I certainly think if someone wrote that article about us we would be

upset.

**S:** I wouldn't be! If people pointed a genuine deficiency in the FWBO well let's be thankful and do something about it. I'd be horrified if someone pointed out well look you've got people in the Western Buddhist Order who aren't really Buddhists, [Laughter] I'd look straight into it! [Laughter]

**Nagabodhi:** To answer my question I think we would get the point if someone wrote that article about us.

**S:** I should jolly well hope so. I think I would even if you didn't! [Laughter] But I'm not so sure about people in the rest of the Buddhist world. I've had some experience of them in the past. I certainly don't think one should go out of one's way to be unpleasant or unfriendly, but I think one can make one's points with a certain trenchancy. It's this that I have in mind, not that one should be personally unpleasant or abusive. That's the last thing one wants to be, but make one's point firmly and clearly.

**Mangala:** Can I just say as regards to Subhuti's article, just being fairly specific, I thought the actual points he made were very very good points. I thought on the whole he made them very well but I did think that some of his actual expressions occasionally I think were just inappropriate and I think unnecessarily offensive. I think a little bit immature actually.

**S:** It may be that we, knowing Subhuti as a person, know - I certainly know him and how full of goodwill he is - one can't really feel that he is wanting to be offensive. It could be that other people outside who don't know him personally take it like that. In that case one has to bear that in mind.

**Tejananda:** Can I just come in with my own next question now because it relates directly to what Mangala just said but maybe goes into it in a bit more detail.

[end of side one      side two]

While I'm completely behind the main thrust of 'Old Net for New Monsters' I can't help feeling that the use of sarcasm, however mild, is inappropriate and unhelpful. For example he says, and I quote "The trouble is that chairperson Gerald has got himself impaled upon his own theory". Also sentences like, quote, "Mr Dupre's trouble is that he has got a little learning" and so on, almost seem calculated to rub the person in question up the wrong way and make him less likely to take the points being made.

**S:** But it's true! [Laughter] Maybe I just know Subhuti too well and I know he wouldn't willingly hurt a fly. The last thing he'd want was to hurt anyone's feelings but maybe one just has to read the article or paper as though one didn't know the person. Maybe that's part of the difficulty. It doesn't sound sarcastic to me. To me it sounds quite good natured but I just know Subhuti and therefore I could almost sort of hear him saying those things but saying them with good nature, not in a sarcastic or .....

**Tejananda:** True but that is the way it's likely to be picked up on.

**S:** One has to bear that in mind too. Without one's point losing its force.

**Dhammarati:** The starting point for the discussion was that Subhuti was a little shaken in his reporting in. He said that from some ten sources he'd been on the receiving end of some quite heavy criticism and the impression that he was getting from the close sources reporting back to him was that in some ways they had quite a bad pennyworth about ( ). So it seems that at least one byproduct of the polemical style that we've taken is that in some quarters we're creating this impression. Do you think.....

**S:** Well I created that impression years ago without being in the least polemical. There were some people years ago who were convinced that I was a thoroughly evil character. I hadn't offended them in any way whatever. So this is a very difficult and obscure field I would say. Subhuti and I did have a bit of discussion about all this and the whole question of image. I said I didn't think our present position was wrong or his position was wrong, but I thought perhaps we ought to give more emphasis to certain things. In the eyes of the public as it were. Because a lot more goes on in the FWBO that people realise. For instance it's become almost the thing to speak of us as the Buddhist movement that goes in for co-ops. This is a way of just dismissing us really and limiting us. That radio programme - was it radio or TV? - that did that. That just relegates us to that particular bracket that we were the co-ops and puja sort of group, ignoring our intellectual approach, the fact that we attach importance to study, ignoring meditation, ignoring the arts. Do you see what I mean? So I said what we had to do was to perhaps emphasise other aspects of the FWBO so that people couldn't but have a more balanced impression of us. If they don't want to have a balanced impression what can you do? Look at the selective way in which Subhuti's book has been reviewed, by people who seem not to have read it.

I think also frankly it's not a bad thing if people are a little afraid of us. Maybe it's not a very nice thing to say but, having had a little experience of people trying to trample one underfoot, as it were, well I think it isn't a bad thing that people are a little afraid of us or many of them at least were to think twice before crossing our path.

**Kamalasila:** On the same sort of issue, do you think there are some issues on which we should be careful of public opinion?

**S:** Oh yes, for sure, yes. We have to be very careful about public opinion on race, on feminism, homosexuality. What else? - apartheid. Christianity not so much. God - you can say what you like about god, but you have to be careful about what you say about Jesus. [Laughter] This is what I've found. Oh yes there are certainly quite a few issues where we should tread very warily in our pronouncements. There's no doubt about that, unfortunately. Oh yes.

Have you found that as chairmen in the course of your work around centres? That certain issues you have to tread warily about.

**Voices:** Oh yes! Most certainly! [Laughter]

**S:** Yes, you're not senior and experienced for nothing, are you.

**Mangala:** I mean why should we be careful about making announcements about those areas. If you say it's not a bad thing that people are a bit afraid ....

**S:** The question is coming from two different areas. When I say it's not a bad thing that people are afraid of us I'm talking about the Buddhist movement. But then Kamalasila's question is about the

public at large I believe. So the public at large is a much bigger entity than the Buddhist movement. We can survive I think if the Buddhist movement in Britain is against us but maybe we couldn't if the great British public was against us. So we do have to be quite careful with regard to certain issues. At least not get ourselves a very very bad press, and there are certain sensitive issues as you all know. It's a question of survival.

**Kamalasila:** But can not issues that are live issues in the Buddhist world go over to the public at large. Can't they be heard of by the public at large. So in that case should we not be careful even within the Sangha ....

**S:** Well for instance supposing I gather that someone is going to attack my book - *The Eternal Legacy* because of what I've said about the Pali Canon being not more authentic than the Mahayana Sutras. That sort of dispute however heated it becomes within the Buddhist world is not going to spill over into the world at large. What sort of thing were you thinking of?

**Kamalasila:** Perhaps the whole issue of sex between men.

**S:** Well that is obviously a very sensitive issue, so one has to consider who one is speaking to. One might have to answer the question in a different way say in a beginners' class than one would say at a chapter meeting of the Order, or if one was being interviewed by someone from the press. One would have to be very careful indeed. But on the other hand one can't be untrue to what one actually thinks. So it requires great tact. This is one of the reasons why I am very concerned that inexperienced people shouldn't speak to the press and why queries from the press should be referred to the Order Office.

**Kamalasila:** I suppose Subhuti's quarrel with Gerald Dupre isn't like this.

**Dhammarati:** (*Cuts in text made by Silabhadra - please address any queries to him or anybody present at this event*) There was the case of the correspondence with '\*\*\*\*\*' (national UK newspaper) following the publication of 'Buddhism for Today' over which....

**S:** That's true, but then you see there was this in a way quite crazy character \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* - on tape you have to be very careful - maybe you should cut that bit, but he's an exceptionally reactive person and I think really quite mentally unbalanced person, and someone in \*\*\*\*\* years ago had upset him quite badly and there's quite a long history. He wrote us some very crazy letters, quite unpleasant letters to which we didn't reply. Well they were addressed to me mostly, I didn't reply. And so he saw his chance to have a go at Subhuti or have a go at us through Subhuti.

**Mangala:** Would you say therefore that as with regards to publications which are aimed at the general public that we should make our point clearly and firmly but without being unnecessarily.....

**S:** I think one shouldn't refer to personalities. One could say 'well some people think that and this is not correct'. I think one should perhaps not refer to specific individuals by name or refute them by name. Do you see what I mean? Unless it's absolutely necessary but I think perhaps one can avoid that.

**Devaraja:** You mentioned areas we also have to be careful about - feminism, race, apartheid. Do you have any.....

**S:** Well maybe we're getting a bit off the track but what I really mean is if it happens that you don't immediately follow the orthodox, what I call pseudo-liberal view, if you don't happen to follow that, you must be very careful how you go about it, because that is a very powerful lobby at the moment. It makes public opinion. This is the sort of contemporary orthodoxy from which you depart at your peril. So if you are aware that in any respect you are departing from that current or contemporary orthodoxy well just be careful how you tread.

**Nagabodhi:** Something on my mind with regard to 'Golden Drum', if I look at the little disputes that fragment the communist party of this country or the Islamic world or the Christian world, to look on as an outsider to some enclosed group and to see their struggles tends to make me dismiss them a bit. If they can't even sort themselves out.... To what extent in that say 'Golden Drum' is a public organ, at least in that it's being picked up by complete beginners on their first visit to the centre, it is on my mind a little that if we have too much in the way of articles that seem to be taking issue with other groups, people will pick this up and get this. I was talking to a lawyer friend of mine whom I spoke to the other night in connection with the 'Old Net' business and I was just asking whether which way a jury would look at it, which argument they'd see as being most serious - he laughed and said, 'well with all due respect they just have to see this as an internecine dispute in a rather silly eccentric world' and he wasn't being insulting to me but this is how they would see it, and in a way it made me think well is there not a danger that even though we take issue and need to, if we do attempt someone reading these things will feel....

**S:** Well obviously it's a question of balance. You can't fill 'Golden Drum' with that sort of material but also you equally don't want the public to think you're sort of wishy-washy and don't really have a mind of your own. There are quite a few people around who dislike that sort of attitude, that you are afraid to take issue with people who you differ from. You're just a bit mealy mouthed as it were and that attitude is quite common in pseudo-spiritual groups. So it is a question of balance.

**Devamitra:** When we were discussing this issue, there seemed to be concern expressed by one or two people at least, that there was a significant amount of unthinking criticism in some of these delicate areas, maybe in classes and presumably in public situations. It's not been my impression that that is the case but I wonder if this does actually go on.

**S:** I must say I have sometimes had the impression that people leading classes and answering questions are a bit clumsy. They get so used to certain things being generally accepted within the FWBO, they no longer realise that they're not generally accepted outside. I think therefore one has to be very very careful in this respect in taking especially beginners' classes and open retreats. Sometimes in all innocence, as it were, - maybe it's ignorance more than innocence - the person concerned, the Order member concerned will make for instance scoffing remarks about marriage or extol the single sex situation without explaining really what it's all about, or even say, dismiss the notion of God with a laugh. It's all right among friends, among fellow Order members, but you can't treat ordinary members of the public that way. They don't necessarily share your assumptions. They may be far from sharing your assumptions and you really have to bear that in mind. I'm pretty certain, in fact I think I can say I know that there were at least in the past, perhaps in the fairly recent past even, some Order members - some mitras too for that matter - who were sometimes a bit heavy handed in this respect and a bit insensitive.

I've talked about this more than once. I think in Tuscany and on other occasions, especially with regard to the idea of God. Don't be too quick to jump in and dismiss or do down the idea of God,

even though you don't have it in Buddhism, but consider that to the person who is asking you this question it is pretty obvious that there is a God or must be God, and perhaps he's never heard before that in Buddhism there isn't a God or you can have religion and spiritual life without that particular belief. It may be utterly new to him or her. So bear that in mind and don't get involved with unnecessary arguments about God when you're supposed to be, say, teaching meditation. You can say if someone asks you what does Buddhism think about God, if you're not sure of your ground with regard to that particular person say well Buddhism has its own reservations about the idea of God but nonetheless Buddhism also believes that whether you believe in God or not you can still practise the mindfulness of breathing, still do the metta bhavana and this is just a meditation class, it's open to everybody, we don't go into those sort of things. Be quite conciliatory and not provoke any clash. I think you should do that in beginners' classes.

If someone comes to you just privately and really wants to thrash it out as it were, well you can say much more.

**Saddhaloka:** Do you think the opposite might also be true in some cases? That some Order members in other circumstances aren't as forthright and outspoken as they might be?

**S:** Well this is true too. Oh yes. And also perhaps not as clear as they should be. Perhaps because their own Dharma knowledge is rather inadequate. Yes that also does happen I know. It's not easy to tread that middle path. You may have a very aggressive and argumentative person to deal with who has perhaps read quite a lot of books on Buddhism, and maybe the poor Order member gets out of his depth a bit.

How are we doing with the questions?

**Tejananda:** We've got about eight down and up to eighteen in all. We'll move onto another topic. The ordination conference. A question from Dhammarati about man to man marking.

**S:** What is that? Man to man marking?

**Dhammarati:** It's a term borrowed from football, suggesting that each mitra has a specific Order member and that mitra will be that Order member's responsibility. So every mitra will have a particular named Order member that they will have some kind of relationship with and sort of responsibility for that Order member. Just a point of clarification because I was under the impression that we had suggested a similar system a couple of years ago at the LBC and I really don't remember this in detail but I got the impression that you had discouraged it as being a premature kalyana mitra relationship, and I wondered if you had new thoughts on this proposal.

**S:** I wouldn't like to make it a general rule but if any particular centre or chapter finds it convenient that one particular Order member should have a definite responsibility for one particular mitra, fair enough. But it may not always be possible for one reason or another, so I suggest don't make it a general rule but let centres or chapters be free to make that arrangement in certain cases if they think necessary. That would be my immediate response to that question.

**Devamitra:** Perhaps I can just clarify as I can remember the issue as it relates a few years ago. What I remember you objecting to was that the LBC didn't feel able to accept any more mitras because they didn't have enough Order members to, as it were, farm out to all the new mitras and that's what you seemed to object to then. You didn't want this sort of log-jamming syndrome. But I think what

Vessantara's actually putting forward would not necessarily lead to that.

**S:** Well if it seems helpful with regard to particular centres or chapters, or in the case of certain mitras, do it by all means.

**Tejananda:** Another question from Dhammarati on initiative.

**S:** Whose?

**Dhammarati:** It was from the proposals from the mitra convenors conference again. There was quite a strong emphasis put first of all on the lack of initiative in the Order and the recommendation that....

**S:** When you say 'In the Order', that sounds a bit vague.

**Dhammarati:** Well I believe the context of it was that enough new Order members, young Order members, are able to actively take on responsibility, and a movement with the Order the size that it has we don't have this as much as perhaps we should.

**S:** When you say responsibility or take on responsibility what do you think in terms of? - becoming say council members or starting up new centres?

**Dhammarati:** ....Devamitra for clarification but I would have understood it as taking responsibility in centres, in co-operatives, on the councils.

**S:** Some Order members don't even take the responsibility of paying their Order fees or turning up at the National Order weekends, unless of course there's good reason not to. It's very difficult actually to find a good reason not to. I think these are the areas where initially the taking of responsibility must be encouraged. Attending the chapter meetings.

**Dhammarati:** The recommendations of the conference are stressing for instance that (unclear)

**S:** This is something I was going to say something about. I think there's been a bit of confusion here because I myself started talking in a sort of general way some time ago about more need for a Bodhisattva spirit. Fair enough. So then I think it was suggested that in the course of Tuscany there should be more emphasis on the Bodhisattva spirit. But then I started to detect that some people at least seemed to be assuming that if people develop more bodhisattva spirit they'll automatically go straight into a co-op and work there. This wasn't what I meant at all. Some might, but others as a result of that upsurge of bodhisattva spirit might decide that they wanted to go and engage in full-time meditation or they wanted to study and write. Do you see what I mean? But I'm sure that at least some people thought that or perhaps even think that the only real manifestation of bodhisattva spirit is to go and work in a co-op. That isn't really the case. I wasn't meaning that. But yes, people do seem to be quite lacking in initiative. I've got my own theories about that but it is a fact. It shows itself in their not, for instance, paying their Order fees and even sometimes not paying their rents on time if they're living in Phoenix Co-operative. I had to get on to people a year or so ago about this. It was really quite shameful to see names of Order members appearing again and again in Phoenix minutes as having been sent letter number one, letter number two and then letter number three, and in some cases even threatened with court proceedings if they hadn't paid up their rent. You see. So this is really quite dreadful.

**Dhammarati:** There was a more specific point I was coming to and that was it seems to me that there's always, as it were, been a stress, maybe strong stress of Buddhist ethics to do with the individual taking responsibility and while for instance with meditation we have a definite method that brings about awareness, it seems that the theoretical stress on responsibility hasn't been enough to bring about initiative and to bring about a real change in people's behaviour so far. What I wondered was how do we take steps to bring about more responsibility and more initiative.

**S:** That's quite a big question because it's bound up with quite fundamental issues. I suppose one way is to stop doing things for people so that they have to do them for themselves. And not allow people to hand over responsibility. Sometimes at Padmaloka it's been found that Order members come on events, not bothering about payment, they just leave that to the treasurers of their centres, not realising it's their responsibility, they are present, it's up to them to make sure that the money is paid. It's not their treasurer's responsibility. Do you see what I mean? I think this is one of the things that can be thrashed out in chapter meetings. This is one of the things that I had in mind, one of the issues that I had in mind, that chapters should deal with in chapter meetings, and that's one of the reasons I spoke of chapter meetings as spiritual workshops. I don't think any amount of exhortation by me is going to help very much at all.

**Dhammarati:** Does that mean in effect it comes down to the kind of communication and criticism between individual Order members.

**S:** Yes it does. The chapter, leaving aside other situations, is the natural venue for tackling issues. For instance we've had recently the really quite dreadful case of an Order member actually assaulting a mitra and that's really dreadful. I really hope his chapter is going to take that up with him. [Pause]

**Nagabodhi:** Bhante, you did say you had some theories about the lack of initiative. Would you like to share those?

**S:** No, I'm going to go into detail. I've touched on them before. I think it's partly to do with the whole sort of climate in Britain itself currently. I think it has a lot to do with that, and everything seemingly sort of running down. The economy running down, so many other things running down, Britain's power in the world having run down. It's been running down all through my lifetime. I can remember celebrating Empire Day when there was an Empire to celebrate. I remember it very clearly. All filing out into the playground all decorated with Union Jacks and everybody really proud of the Empire and really celebrating the fact that they had it. Two years later it was called Commonwealth Day. I think it was beginning to be called Commonwealth Day in progressive circles even then, but our school certainly wasn't a progressive school! And so we had definitely an Empire Day and we really enjoyed celebrating the fact that we had an Empire. Well, the story since then has been one of continual decline until there's no Empire. There's the Commonwealth that has recently been in danger of breaking up. What's the Commonwealth and Empire so to speak? Some members of the Commonwealth are even thinking of expelling Britain from the Commonwealth.

So I think this all - this is just one particular very broad (?) but I think this all has its effect indirectly on some people at least. But it's a very big issue. But even so a real individual should not be affected by all that. And I think, yes, initiative and individuality must be encouraged. I think if we're not careful we will tend, even unintentionally, to encourage mitras to be a bit conformist and not take responsibility for themselves and then that will continue perhaps when they're Order members. We must be really careful we don't try and do their thinking for them or direct them too much.

**Dhammarati:** Could you give an example, Bhante, of how you think that happens now?

**S:** I think this would be going into this particular subject too much. I think Order members must just watch themselves, especially those who are in influential positions as, say, chairmen and secretaries and treasurers and mitra convenors are. But certainly the chapter meeting is the proper venue for thrashing out instances where perhaps you feel an Order member has not been very responsible. It's not just a question of getting at him or nagging him or anything of that sort but really drawing his attention to his lack of responsibility and encouraging him in a positive way to be more responsible.

**Tejananda:** A related question on responsibility. To what extent and in which areas should we look for the exhibition of responsibility in mitras as a prerequisite of ordination?

**S:** Responsibility. Well they must be responsible for themselves in the first place. That means you have to allow them to be responsible for themselves and encourage them to be responsible for themselves. [Pause] And you must monitor their performance. If you give them, say, a job to do, just check that they do it. If they don't just take it up with them. It may be something like being responsible for providing the flowers in the shrine, something quite simple and easy, but they don't do it. They might have promised to do it but they don't do it, so you take it up with them and get them to understand that this shows a lack of responsibility. And of course you certainly don't give them responsibilities which are beyond them as mitras.

**Tejananda:** So is it just a question of trying to see that there is a consistency in the way that a person takes responsibility as an indication that they're ready....

**S:** Yes, there's sort of taking responsibility and being given responsibility. If someone can take responsibility spontaneously and sensibly that's good. For instance someone, say a mitra, sees that the flowers on the shrine need changing. Well no one's asked him to change them but he just goes and does it. Do you see what I mean? But if he doesn't notice and an Order member or someone says would you just mind changing the flowers and he says, 'OK, I'll do it this afternoon', and he doesn't do it that afternoon, well then you have to take it up with him and make him understand that this shows a lack of responsibility not to keep his word. It's just in simple matters of this sort that you encourage the person to be more responsible. If someone can take responsibility themselves well that's a very good sign.

But again you have to be careful because sometimes people take responsibility without really being in a position to. You might for instance come back from retreat and find that a certain mitra's reorganised and repainted the whole shrine but in a thoroughly inappropriate way. Well that isn't quite responsibility in the sense that one is trying to encourage. He's taking as it were a bit too much upon himself. Or perhaps he's asked something by a visitor or someone coming to the centre and instead of referring the person to the Order member he thinks he can handle it himself when in fact he can't.

**Tejananda:** There was a fair degree of divergence of opinion in our group with regard to the actual degree of responsibility which one could expect say of a new Order member. Whether that should be simply being able to take basic responsibility for themselves or even for a larger situation.

**S:** I think you have to be very careful about new and young Order members, because I do know that quite a lot of new, and again especially young Order members, do find that process of adjustment after returning from Tuscany especially, quite difficult and quite a high percentage of Order members

returning from Tuscany find the first year as an Order member for one reason or another, quite difficult. In some cases very difficult. So they mustn't be given much in the way of responsibility until they've really found their feet again. It isn't really fair to unload too much on them, unless they are obviously capable and willing and able to take on responsibility even then. But even then you have to be quite careful because they may be outwardly confident and able to take on responsibility but not really inwardly so. They may not even know it themselves. There have been one or two cases of this sort where a new newly ordained Order member apparently capable and confident has taken on big responsibilities and it has transpired that he hasn't really been up to it. That there were certain, as it were, hidden weaknesses that he didn't know himself that he had.

So I think give the new Order member a good year to settle in as an Order member. Don't start putting responsibilities on him straight away. I know it's quite tempting for the chairman to think, 'Ah a new Order member!', you unload all sorts of things onto him and it's very unwise to do that.

**Tejananda:** Dhammarati has a question on primacy of lifestyle.

**Dhammarati:** Again this is something arising from the conference on the ordination process, especially section three which is a recommendation for the criteria for ordination. There's a preamble to the section that recognises that there will be genuine exceptions and that these are recommendations rather than unbending rules. But then it goes on to make a number of points which include mitras shouldn't be accepted on the ordination course if they have to go into debt for the purpose, that because it's symptomatic of lack of ability to take responsibility and we don't recommend for ordination a mitra who's on the dole, and that mitras should have lived in a closed single sex community for at least two years, and that they would have worked in a right livelihood co-op for that period prior to ordination; I couldn't help wondering I suppose if this didn't come down close to defining the lifestyle that you expect Order members to be following, even with the caveat given.

**S:** I must say that reading through this, this was very much my own reaction. I felt that the path to ordination was perhaps, despite that caveat, being made rather narrow. I was a bit concerned about that. But in a way I'm not too concerned because as a sort of last resort there's always myself. I can say well look I think he's ready and, OK he may be married, he may have ten children and he may not be able to go to Tuscany but I believe he is really committed and he's going to be ordained, you see. *[Laughing as he speaks]* I'm just a bit worried what's going to happen when I'm no longer around to perhaps recognise the exception or perhaps feel able to take a bit of a risk even with somebody. I think we have to be very careful if we have paid lip service to the principle that commitment is primary and lifestyle secondary. It does seem that we are placing quite a lot of emphasis, I won't say on lifestyle but on a particular road to ordination. That was my initial feeling. I'm certainly not against upgrading but I think we must be very careful that, as I said, we don't make to ordination just too narrow. So narrow that very few people can go along it, even people who are actually genuinely committed.

It isn't just a question of saying well he's got time to go to Tuscany, therefore he should go. One has to reckon that perhaps there are certain who don't fit so easily into these sort of patterns and programmes. There are people like that, but who are nonetheless very genuine, and I think we have to be very careful that we don't by our over systematic approach, which may be good for a very large number of people, tend to exclude such more, as it were, freewheeling people. Don't forget most of you haven't gone through any sort of process like that at all! You're probably not much the worse for that. In some cases at least. Maybe some of you ten, fifteen years ago could have done with a bit

more discipline in the FWBO. Never mind. [Laughter] You've learnt the hard way.

Yes, I tend to agree with your reservations. But again not that I'm against upgrading the Order, but we have to be careful we don't try to do it just by narrowing things.

**Tejananda:** Sona, do you still have a question?

**Sona:** I think it's answered. I was going to ask a question about the recommendations for mitras attending a number of retreats before... It did occur to me that mitras would be required to attend something like two months of retreats for three years before they would be ready to go on the ordination course and the course itself would be three months, possibly maybe extended to six months, for anyone in a normal job or career this would be out of the question, and in view of the fact that we do seem to perhaps want to encourage more people with skills into the Order, this would effectively discourage.

**S:** Yes. [Pause] I think we have to be very careful that we don't make the preparation for ordination so rigorous that in fact what we are aiming to produce is not just an Order member, but an Order member who is fully qualified to teach. Do you see what I mean? Because you can be an Order member in the full sense without necessarily being qualified to teach. That is a separate thing, as it were, which you can take up after ordination or into which you naturally develop, but I think we should be very careful that we don't confuse the production, so to speak, of an Order member with the production of a fully equipped and experienced teacher of Buddhism.

**Kamalasila:** I think that in that part of the conference the aim was not to produce Order members who were capable of teaching but Order members who were capable of practising.

**S:** But for instance if one makes the three year study course a requirement, you see that suggests that he's going to be ready to teach.

**Kamalasila:** I wasn't really thinking of that specifically.....

**S:** But that is one of the things that has been suggested should be made, as it were, compulsory unless there's very good reason otherwise.

**Kamalasila:** Sona's question though was in regard to meditation requirements. Perhaps that is a bit rigid but do you not think that people who are going to be ordained should have a certain amount of meditation experience, should know how to meditate.

**S:** Yes, I think they should know how to meditate, well even mitras are supposed to meditate regularly and the Order member who gets a visualisation and a mantra recitation practice, should know how to do that, but I think levels do vary. I know quite definitely there are people, say, holding down jobs in the outside world, in contact with the FWBO, including some mitras who, nonetheless keep up a very regular and steady meditation practice. So one has to bear in mind things like that. There are people who've been ....

**[End of tape one    tape two]**

There are people who've been to Tuscany and been on retreats but who don't keep up a regular meditation practice in that way. Some of the women mitras are very good in this respect I must say.

Really quite devoted to meditation and there's a small group I heard only yesterday or today, who want to make their community more and more a meditating community. They've all got jobs outside but they want to have an emphasis on meditation and puja in their community and they're all regular in meditation and they often have spontaneous pujas. So there are some people who, as it were, quite naturally get into meditation.

So the fact that you insist that people go on these courses doesn't necessarily mean that you actually will in all cases get them meditating regularly, nor that they will not be meditating regularly if they don't go on these courses. Again one has to be careful of rigidity. But I think I would like to see the movement as a whole strengthening its base in the world. I don't think it will be a bad thing if we did have now a few more Order members and mitras who are definitely committed to us, who were out in the world and working.

This brings me back to a point that I've been thinking about, that if we're not careful, in the case of the co-ops we fall between two stools in terms of contacting people. It seems to me that there are two ways in which we can contact people as Buddhists or as Order members. One way is through the centres and organised Buddhist activities. You advertise and all that and people come to you, you contact them. But there are other people who, holding down a job somewhere, are quite able to talk to their friends about Buddhism, their ordinary friends, and get them interested and either bring them along to a centre or send them along to a centre, are able to function in that way, but I think what sometimes happens in the case of co-ops that people, whether Order members or mitras, are so busy in the co-ops and the energies are so much absorbed, well because they're working in the co-op they don't contact people in the ordinary social way as they would if they had a job in the world; but also they're so busy sometimes working in the co-ops that they have no time to function in the centre, and though their contact with one another is good, they don't have much outside contact and therefore don't bring in new people. In this way they can fall between two stools.

So I think centres have to be very careful about setting up co-ops. I think it's only quite a big, strong centre that should set up a co-op, and the co-ops shouldn't take a disproportionate amount of the Order members' and the centre's time and energy. Do you see what I'm getting at. I have been a bit concerned about the small number of people getting ordained. I have even wondered whether the Order isn't shrinking, because taking let's say the number of people going to Tuscany ever year as a rough index, the Order is bigger every year, but the number of people going to Tuscany remains stable or even decreases. Now what does that mean?

Also we haven't yet started encountering the natural wastage through death. In not so many years time we're going to lose ten or fifteen Order members every year. At that rate at the moment we would hardly be able to replace them. So actually if we continue in the way that we are at present, after say twenty years the Order will start getting smaller and smaller until, after say another twenty or thirty years perhaps it would hardly exist. Do you see what I mean? The present Order is not going to last forever. We are all going to drop off one by one, some of us sooner than others. But I have been quite concerned about this recently. It isn't simply that our standards have become higher. It's not that. They haven't become so much higher. But I just wonder whether a large enough proportion of Order members are in genuine contact with the public in one way or another. [Pause]

Especially in this connection I've been urging some people to have more public lectures, on neutral ground, as it were, not lectures at the centre but on neutral ground, well advertised. Because we've got very good speakers in the movement now. I think we should be doing much more of that kind of thing. We've got twelve or fourteen excellent speakers at least. Anyway let's carry on perhaps.

**Kamalasila:** Could I just come back to the question of our criteria from the ordination conference. Do you not think that there's any case for setting standards through objective criteria such as the ones we've been proposing?

**S:** I think one must be careful not to emphasise the organisational aspect of things, and also pay attention to the psychological and spiritual. It's almost as though you're making up for the fact that you can't have personal contact with a person and assess him personally by putting him through a rather more demanding process which you hope will do the trick. Do you see what I mean?

**Kamalasila:** Do you think that that's what we've actually done?

**S:** I think it could turn out like that if one wasn't careful, yes. In that way someone could get through and be ordained, perhaps, without really being ready at all but he's done all the right things. So there's no substitute for the personal contact and personal assessment and personal spiritual friendship.

**Kamalasila:** But on the other hand - I'm just arguing for the sake of illustrating a bit - don't you think there's a possibility of people just not doing anything they would really benefit from doing?

**S:** Oh yes. Sometimes that does happen and sometimes they don't want to do it out of laziness and that has to be tackled, and I think people on the whole do benefit from a definite structure but one has to be very careful one doesn't put all one's eggs into that particular basket. For instance with regard to the three year study course, people have said how much that has helped them and how much they appreciate it. It does give them a definite structure for their study and it does help them. But that's quite another thing to say well unless you've done that three year course you can't be ordained.

**Kamalasila:** So are you saying then that there's a case for having structure but not insisting upon it?

**S:** Yes more or less, yes. Recognising that there will be many exceptions and making sure that you don't just pay lip service to the fact that there will be many exceptions, and be on the lookout for them. Realise that the fact that you've got a good structure doesn't excuse you from genuine personal contact with the people who are making use of that structure or going through that process.

**Tejananda:** We now move on to another area. Questions arising from a discussion of the state of the Order. One from Kamalasila on the three month Order retreats at Vajraloka.

**Kamalasila:** It comes a little bit under what we've just been talking about. I'm not sure that it will actually. You've recommended that Order members attend the Order meditation course at Vajraloka in order to cover in much more depth the five basic practices.

**S:** Right.

**Kamalasila:** What's your thinking behind that? What effect do you think that should have on the state of the Order?

**S:** Well clearly the mental and spiritual state of the Order will be much more positive. Also Order members will be able to teach meditation more effectively, and the majority of Order members, on

some occasion or other, do take meditation classes or at least lead meditation, and obviously they would be greatly helped in that if they had a deeper and more extensive experience of meditation. Also bearing in mind that meditation in the sense of samatha is one of the most important foundations for the development of insight, and unless there's real insight developed well there won't be any real spiritual movement, or any real Order.

Again this is something that chapters can look into. They could compare notes among themselves. I'm quite encouraged by the fact that quite a few people do go on solitary retreats. There's quite a lot going to the centre in Spain. I had a letter from someone recently saying it was quite encouraging to be meditating on solitary retreat knowing that there were I think on that particular week three or four other Order members, or mitras I think it was, also sort of dotted around, all on solitary retreat.

**Kamalasila:** So really you see it mainly in terms of just improving generally the mental state of the Order.

**S:** And obviously it will have that effect. And perhaps it should also be known that we attach importance and that we have a meditation centre. People writing and talking about the FWBO outside seem hardly to mention that. They always mention the co-ops.

**Tejananda:** A question from Devaraja on reprocessing Order members.

**Devaraja:** It is a recommendation of the ordination process conference that Tuscany ordination retreats should not be used to reprocess Order members. Do you agree with this and, if so, what thoughts do you have for not only reprocessing Order members but for their further training, both in the near future and beyond that?

**S:** Well there's no doubt that being part of a Tuscany team does benefit the members of the team, but in selecting people for that team the primary consideration of course is what they'll be able to do for the mitras. So in that sense the Tuscany process isn't used just for reprocessing Order members. There has to be a point where one draws a line. That if an Order member, as one hopes in fact isn't the case, has degenerated, let's say, beyond a certain point, well he just couldn't be invited to Tuscany because it would be good for him hopefully. So the Tuscany process, to the best of my knowledge, has not been used in that particular way. It's the mitras who are hopefully going to be ordained who are the primary consideration. But nonetheless in varying degrees, members of the team get quite a lot out of it and it does benefit them. In some ways Order members are always being reprocessed, aren't they? Everything that happens is a reprocessing. Every time you meditate it's a reprocessing. When you go on a retreat it's a reprocessing, when you give a lecture it's a reprocessing, but perhaps there is room for something more organised. Maybe one shouldn't think of it in terms of reprocessing - perhaps that's a bit negative - but opportunities for Order members to get together on retreat or in other situations and deepen their own experience and understanding of the Dharma, without having to be concerned with the requirements of mitras and friends and others. This is basically what one means isn't it. And from that point of view Tuscany certainly isn't a reprocessing situation for Order members, because they are so much occupied with other people- mitras. Well of course it's sometimes at least good to be occupied with other people instead of with your own wretched self! [Laughter] Some people are a bit too much preoccupied with themselves and their own problems and so on.

But yes it would be good to have retreats and other such situations just for the benefit of Order members. The chairmen's meeting itself is something of this sort. You're not having to concern

yourselves directly with mitras and friends and you're just enjoying the company of your peers as it were.

Of course to come and work in the Order Office would be quite a bit of a reprocessing for some senior and experienced Order members. There's no doubt.

**Nagabodhi:** At least twice a day after meals! [Laughter]

**S:** You can have it all day every day.

**Tejananda:** One question under discussion that we had on international issues and it's from Dhammarati about the fragmentation of the Order.

**Dhammarati:** It's a very general point, Bhante, but reading *Shabda* and in discussion here I can't help but be aware that the further away from England a centre seems to get, the more conflict there seems to be, both within the centre and between the centre and the broader movement. Do you see this as inevitable? Can you see ways of lessening this?

**S:** It is certainly the case, though perhaps we shouldn't overgeneralise just from a very limited experience. We don't have many very distant centres. We've probably only got three if you leave out India, which is in a way a case by itself. We've only really got in the way of distance, well maybe four or five at the most .... we've got let's say New Zealand, the centres in New Zealand, we've got Sydney, we've got the Boston centre, we've got Helsinki.

**Mangala:** Germany.

**S:** I suppose you could reckon Germany too, yes. There has been what one might describe as an unusually high level of internal conflict in these centres. In two or three of them much more than in others. I think there are various reasons for that. Perhaps it's not easy to say very much in a situation like this. One would need to go into a lot of detail and that might not be the correct approach.

Certainly Order members who are, as it were, removed from the centre of things need to keep in very close contact with the Order in Britain, because this is where the movement is strongest and where the Order is strongest, and I think they should come back periodically. I think sometimes a slightly nationalistic spirit does creep in. They think in terms of coming to England, or coming to Britain, not just coming to the place where the Order happens to be strongest. I think it really points in the long run to being particularly careful in ordaining people who are likely to go back to a distant country from which they originally came. I think this is what it really boils down to in the end, from this end as it were. We need almost to be extra sure of them. I think that's pretty obvious really in the light of past experience. I think if a small group of Order members, a team of Order members, go off to some distant place to start up a centre, I think we have to be much more sure that they really are in good communication with one another. I think they should have had extensive experience of working together in this country. On the other hand one must recognise that one can't, as it were, forcibly stop Order members doing the things that they want to do. Sometimes they do go against advice. Anyway perhaps we can leave that.

**Tejananda:** We pass onto another area of spiritual practices. A question from Devaraja about a proposed ritual working party.

**Devaraja:** We have been considering ritual ceremony and shrineroom etiquette at the A.G.M. and we have decided to set up a working party to go into this area more deeply. Are there any things you would particularly like the working party to look at or experiment with, for example are there musical instruments that you think might be suitable for our pujas, and a number of years ago you suggested that offering mudras could be used in the puja. Would you like us still to do this or develop this?

**S:** I think all these things need to be looked into. I certainly feel that there's room for a lot of development in the movement with regard to pujas. I'd like just to see pujas becoming much more elaborate and meaningful. I don't mean on all occasions or for everybody because such pujas wouldn't be suitable for newcomers, but certainly say with regard to Order members. So I'm quite in favour of people looking into this whole area. I got a letter from Suvajra not so long ago talking about his experience of Tibetan pujas in India and he was saying he wished there was something like that in the FWBO. Well I say there's no reason why there shouldn't be. It's going to take time. It took the Tibetans centuries to develop those great pujas. We're not going to develop them in just a few years. But I think we can make a start. I think we have to be very careful. Nothing new should be introduced, as it were, unilaterally, but Order members or a group of Order members can experiment among themselves and then just make recommendations to me and then we can try out certain things or canvass the Order as a whole, see how they feel. It will be a slow and laborious process, but I think that's the only way we can do it at present. Sometimes we have introduced things in Tuscany and maybe they've caught on from there. So I'm all in favour of such a group.

**Tejananda:** The idea we had, Bhante, was to initiate a working party and perhaps have a week's retreat to actually work on new developments, new ideas, maybe leading up to an Order weekend at which the Order could be introduced to those ideas.

**S:** Yes, and then you could invite feedback. We have introduced new things from time to time, like the reading out of the names of Order members when we do the Metta Bhavana. This is comparatively new. Some years ago I started editing a new Sevenfold Puja from the Sutra of Golden Light with emphasis on confession. I had to drop it because I was busy with other things but I still have it in mind to finish that. So yes I'm all in favour of giving much more attention to the whole question of pujas and making them richer and more meaningful and more enjoyable and much more vehicles of inspiration generally. Because a lot of people do enjoy pujas very very much and get a lot out of them. They really are very valuable.

**Tejananda:** A final question from me. It's about the possible implications of the five basic practice retreats at Vajraloka. Kamalasila suggested in our discussion that perhaps Order members shouldn't be able to go on a sadhana retreat at Vajraloka until they'd done a five basic practice retreat. He said, "They're not ready to do a sadhana retreat". [Laughter] This led us to wonder whether mitras nearing ordination should perhaps be expected to be experienced in these practices prior to receiving a visualisation practice upon ordination. But further I thought that in view of the fact that we discourage non Order members from doing vipassana practices anyway, perhaps this would be inappropriate as it would be more consistent for newly ordained Order members maybe not even to receive a visualisation practice until they had done at least a couple of post-ordination vipassana retreats. How do you feel about this?

**S:** I suppose in principle my comments are as they were before with regard to all the recommendations about the upgrading of the requirements for ordination. I think it really amounts to that. I think one must be careful while actually upgrading those requirements not to make the path

too narrow. I'd certainly like to think that Order members thought in terms of going further. I think there is a bit of a tendency of well you're ordained and that's that. You sort of rest on your laurels. I think Order members generally need to think more in terms of deepening their, say, knowledge of the Dharma, their experience in meditation, their ability as speakers, as organisers. I think there isn't nearly enough emphasis on that. Order members don't think sufficiently in those sort of terms. I think they come to a halt or settle down on a certain level quite easily. Do you not feel this? (*murmurs of assent*)

Maybe there also needs to be quite a bit more specialisation in the Order. Certain people devoting themselves more and more intensively to certain areas, like meditation or study, without becoming over specialised of course, but nevertheless concentrating their efforts in particular fields. So that other Order members could learn from them. [Pause]

Is that it? We've got through the whole lot then. How many were there, eighteen?

**Tejananda:** Eighteen.

**S:** How many more days of discussion have we?

**Tejananda:** Well we've finished our discussions. We're now just having groups to come up with questions. One of the groups has finished discussing the business that we did, the other two haven't, so more questions might come about.

**S:** So there will be some more questions for tomorrow evening?

**Tejananda:** Certainly.

**S:** Do people feel the time has been well spent? This last ten or twelve days?

Good.

**Suvajra:** Is there anything you'd like us to consider?

**S:** I think you've got enough to consider! I think you could certainly, at least in your individual capacities, encourage people to attend chapter meetings regularly and make the chapter meetings more of the nature of spiritual workshops and encourage Order members to attend the national and regional Order weekends and of course encourage your particular chapter convenors to make quite sure that they attend the national Order weekends and do get together, because they will be my principal means of communication.

Also yourselves set a good example and encourage others to send in their reportings in to *Shabda*. Reportings in have been quite scrappy for some months. For me personally *Shabda's* my principal source of information about what Order members are doing, especially as the majority of them don't write regularly, so I think one must give more attention to this. This is for most Order members their principal means of communication with the whole of the rest of the Order. It's not their only means of communication with the whole of the rest of the Order, and especially think of people overseas who love to hear or to be able to read about what Order members, especially Order members that they know, are doing here in Britain, and are very disappointed sometimes when month after month there's no reporting in in *Shabda* from certain Order members.

**Mangala:** Bhante, with regard to *Shabda* obviously the Order's going to keep growing and growing and *Shabda's* going to get bigger and bigger, do you think it's really feasible that it can continue in its present format?

**S:** Well obviously not. In fact there has already been a development, because there's now a Hindi *Shabda*, because there's the language problem. Perhaps not every Order member, or even the majority one day, are going to understand English. That's the case at present, that the majority do understand English, but we may have many Order members - well we will have I hope - who don't understand English. I believe that in Finland we've got mitras who don't speak English particularly and if they're ordained well they're going to depend on translations. Certainly we have got about ten or twelve, at least, Indian Order members who don't know English, which is mainly the reason why they've started a Hindi *Shabda*.

**Mangala:** Another point, still on *Shabda*, is there any simple criterion as it were by which one could determine what sort of things should appear in *Shabda*?

**S:** Well as you know *Shabda's* unedited. It places the responsibility on Order members themselves, and I think sometimes they don't realise the nature of that responsibility. They don't realise that they're addressing the whole of the rest of the Order and I think some of the things that are reported in are not worth reporting in, they're so trivial. I don't mean that you should edit or doctor your reporting in or not be honest but I think you should really ask yourself well what am I doing, what do I want to communicate to the rest of the Order. You ought to have something worth communicating. If you don't have, why not? If the only thing you've got to report is you were rather depressed last month [Laughter] or that you're really upset because your girlfriend has left you or else you had a sort of holiday but you didn't enjoy it very much and maybe you went to the wrong place and so on and so forth, well is that really... not only is it worth reporting in, but ought you have had that sort of thing to report in anyway? People do respond to reporting in. It does affect them. Some of the lengthy articles that have appeared by people who have been to India have had a very positive effect and an inspiring effect on a lot of people, and every Order member will have something of that order to report in. If not why not.

Some of the reportings in have been really quite shameful. Not just as a reporting in but just the fact that the person concerned after a whole month or sometimes it's more than a month, has nothing better to say than that. Well sometimes of course people do genuinely, as it were, go through things, that's quite different, but sometimes it seems a bit self-indulgent or that people either haven't made a sufficient effort that month or haven't sufficiently thought what was worth reporting in, or both.

**Mangala:** Do you think the fact that one is aware that one is also communicating say with people in India, that certain issues might be rather more sensitive, do you think one should therefore as it were censor or whatever, abbreviate one's reporting in to accommodate....

**S:** I think one should or one should try to word it in such a way that people in the UK get the message and people in India don't. You see what I mean. Also ask yourself well maybe their attitude is correct and yours isn't. Maybe you have to do a bit of self questioning too. Fortunately I think Lokamitra goes through *Shabda* and censors it where necessary. [Laughter]

**Nagabodhi:** They just disappear!

**S:** The standard of the Indian Order members reporting in is quite uniformly high I think compared with the general or average standard of the reporting in in this country, at least until very recently. I must say it has improved quite a lot over the last two years but sometimes certain individuals fall by the wayside so to speak,

**Mangala:** I think a lot of Order members here probably don't really appreciate the fact that they are being read by Indians and other people and....

**S:** Well they ought to. After all they know that there are Indian Order members. They should know by this time that their attitude in certain respects is a bit different, or that certain things would need to be explained or made clear. That they wouldn't necessarily understand every little reference or innuendo or maybe even quotation.

**Sona:** Don't you think it would be better if Order members actually wrote a reporting in for *Shabda* rather than writing up what they say on an Order weekend, because when you're reporting into a group.... at the last Order weekend I reported in to a group of eight people and it was markedly quite intimate and when I wrote up the report I had to almost rewrite it thinking about...

**S:** I think that does happen automatically anyway. You never write exactly what you said because you don't have a tape recorder, you don't tape record what you said. I know some people even remark in the course of their written reporting in that this is not actually what I said, but here is my reporting in. That's quite acceptable. But on the whole I think there's a marked improvement in the quality of reportings in in *Shabda*. I'd like to see even greater improvement. And of course more regular reportings in. So many people that I looked for their reportings in month after month in *Shabda* but I don't see very much. I think it's quite important that you have the Order and you have the Order in focus, be aware of it, the whole Order, and you as a member of that Order, communicating with it, and reporting in to it. That you are aware of it and it is aware of you as it reads. Because everybody reads your particular reporting in. You really miss out on something if you don't report in or often don't send anything to *Shabda*.

I think people have really got to give priority to these things. Sometimes you hear people say I couldn't come to the Order weekend, I had to go and see my brother. Well why is it they don't say well I can't come and see you this weekend, I've got to go to the Order weekend? Why don't they speak in those terms to themselves. Why is it always I had to do the other thing, not that I had to go on the Order weekend. The only real excuses are sickness or the severe illness of someone closely connected with you or an actual death or something of that sort.

Anyway let's leave it there.

[End of session]

[Tape Three side one]

**Next Session - 15th August 1986**

**Tejananda:** We've got just eleven. Beginning with one from Devaraja. a few of these are some things from last night. This one's about Dharma teacher training.

**Devaraja:** You've differentiated between preparing mitras to become Order members and training

them to become Order members who can teach. Do we need therefore to think in terms of training post-ordination those Order members who are suitable and have a desire to teach as Dharma teachers or as acharyas. It occurs to me that apart from improving our impact in the world this might also help the Order in several ways: It could give a specific post-ordination training that Order members could take part in, giving them a further goal. It could give Order members greater confidence in their ability to teach, and those Order members who don't feel particularly qualified to answer questions on the Dharma or don't have a desire to express their commitment in that way would feel freer to direct the public towards the acharyas.

**S:** I think really it should be a natural process, a natural evolution. I never went through a training course or training programme. Perhaps it would have been better if I had but this wasn't the practice in the Buddha's time and for some time afterwards. One would have thought that a responsible Order member, and an Order member by definition is responsible, would want to deepen his experience, to extend his knowledge of the Dharma and make himself generally as effective as possible. I think we have to perhaps resist a tendency to think that we've got to sort of lay everything on in a formal organised way. I think we have to be very careful about that. Having said that, there's no reason why there shouldn't be, as it were, facilities of a more organised type, but I think we have to be very careful nonetheless that we don't take the individual Order member's responsibility for himself and the improvement of his own knowledge, out of his hands, so that he sort of sits back and says 'well what can I do, there's no suitable course for me'. Do you see what I mean?

We have to be careful that we don't become in miniature the government doing everything for everybody. For instance people read quite a lot. Some people they read all sorts of things. For every one Dharma book they read or book about the Dharma they read nine that are not about the Dharma I know. So it would seem in a sense they don't want to study the Dharma or maybe they find the Dharma hard going or they find a little of the Dharma goes a long way. But I have been sometimes surprised the lack of real Dharma study among Order members. They don't keep up. Very few people keep up with say recent publications or new translations of texts. One could say they don't have time but most people them have time to read fiction or whatever, poetry at least or travel books. One does find time. So anyway yes I am in favour of some facilities being provided but, nonetheless I think there must be a strong emphasis on people doing what they can to educate themselves also. It is not the responsibility say of The Order, whatever that might mean, that abstraction, to provide courses for Order members in default of them, as it were, doing anything to help themselves in this respect. So the emphasis must be on one's own responsibility for oneself all the time. Do you see what I'm getting at?

Obviously if you do study in a systematic way with someone more experienced than yourself, very often you do learn more quickly and better than you would studying by yourself, but there's nothing to prevent the individual Order member making arrangements to get together for study with a more experienced Order member. He can up to a point make his own arrangements.

**Tejananda:** Dharmamati has a following question on a Dharmadhuta college.

**Dharmamati:** This goes back to a conversation with Vessantara who seems to know more about this than me, but basically what do you think about the establishment of such a college where there is the facilities for deeper study of the Dharma?

**S:** I think probably that would be a good thing in the long run, but bearing in mind what I've already said. The emphasis would be on facilities, not spoonfeeding. There should be a place, yes, a quiet

place where Order members could stay, where there'd be some arrangement for their support or some arrangement whereby they could support themselves. Again be careful of the spoonfeeding, and where there would be a good library. You can't expect every Order member to have a remarkably good library - it's too expensive to collect as I know very well, but yes there should be a very good library and there should be perhaps resident tutors whom people can approach and who would conduct seminars and give talks. That kind of thing where there are all the facilities for pursuing study oneself and in association with others, and where there would be some teaching available for more experienced people. I think that would be a good thing. It could be, to begin with, on quite a small scale. It will need money of course, I hardly need remind you of that, but I think it can be done.

**Mangala:** Would you say Bhante that you're not in favour of a traditional monastic teaching system such as they had in Tibet?

**S:** I'm not sure how traditional the Tibetan system was. It became traditional. It's been traditional for three hundred years, but that isn't very long when one considers the history of Buddhism. I don't know if you remember my review of 'The Life and Teachings of Geshe Rabten'. I commented there that the Tibetan monastic system of the Gelugpas, and their monastic colleges, seemed to involve a tremendous amount of cramming. So I wouldn't encourage that sort of system. In a way I would say it was untraditional, that you should just be crammed with material like that, and I commented on Geshe Rabten's fondness for the simile of the factory. You remember that? So I don't think we can really take the Tibetan system, or Gelugpa system, as a model in that respect. I think perhaps it was rather too highly organised, and perhaps - yes there was definitely much too much emphasis just on study, committing texts to memory. Not that I'm against learning things by heart but not to the extraordinary degree that they did. I'm certainly not in favour of people being given in the course of these studies hundreds and hundreds of initiations for practices that they're never actually get around to practising. That seems really in a way crazy.

So even if we did adopt that sort of model it would require great modification. I think the most pleasing thing about the Tibetan monastic system, or Gelugpa monastic system on the whole, was that there was place for everybody, in the sense that the monastery was almost a self-contained entity, a self contained community, with hundreds and thousands of monks all, in varying degrees, committed to the Three Jewels, all participating in communal festivals and daily pujas, but each one making his own contribution to the life of the monastery, whether as a cook or as a carpenter, whether as a teacher, whether as an attendant, whether as an administrator, and all equally feeling very much part of that monastic community. I think that's the great lesson of the Gelugpa form of Tibetan monastic life. The crammers were in the minority. We mustn't forget that, and in a sense were supported, at least to a great extent supported, by the rest of the community. Others would be doing the cooking, others would be doing the administering, others would be making the financial arrangements, others would be perhaps conducting the pujas.

**Tejananda:** The third question is from Sona about the three year study course.

**Sona:** There seems to have been some confusion in the past about the three year study course for mitras, and from what you said last night it would seem that it was not a prerequisite for ordination that a mitra completed the three year study course.

**S:** Not an absolute one, no.

**Sona:** But as I understand it Devamitra, I think in inviting people on the pre-ordination course tells

mitras that they would be expected to have completed the course.

**S:** Expected. That's not quite the same thing as it being made an absolute requirement, yes. Because there would be some mitras who can't even come on the pre-ordination course. So yes, expected perhaps one could say, but not in the sense of it being an absolute requirement. All who were able and who didn't have very strong reasons for not completing it would be expected to complete it. I must say in some ways I'm no longer, if I ever was, an authority on that mitra study course. It's become rather complicated with people joining at various points and the study group leaders and so I tend to leave it all to Devamitra who seems quite au fait with all the details, so perhaps I'll just confine myself to reminding people that no system should become too rigid.

**Tejananda:** Now a question from Susiddhi about the Order Office.

**Susiddhi:** Are there particular Order members who you would like to join the Order Office. If you specified individual people, perhaps we could make it possible for them to be freed.

**S:** I'd have to think about that. I'd have to consider it very carefully. Of course I must remind you it's not enough to free them, they've got to be supported. At present I think we're supporting - again I'm not an authority on the details - I think possibly three people or maybe two and a half, something like that, which isn't really very much.

**Susiddhi:** About two and a half thousand per person.

**S:** I think it is about that, yes. But I am very mindful of the fact that most chairmen are virtually indispensable, one could say. Some no doubt, less indispensable than others. But the most capable chairmen, if one can distinguish in that way among chairmen, are likely to be some of the least available. But yes I will think about it.

**Susiddhi:** I think over a period of time if your wishes were known, over a period of time it could probably be arranged.

**S:** There have been other people whom I did really consider very suitable and would have liked to have in the Order Office and whom I think Subhuti approached, I think it was last year, who didn't want to work in the Order Office. Subhuti and I were rather surprised. I think they thought of the Order Office as a work situation as very constricting, that they'd be very much tied down and wouldn't be able to get down to London very often or very easily etc. I think that played quite a part. I don't always understand this mysterious attraction that London has. Or Norwich for that matter. [Laughter]

**Suvajra:** Something to do with playing tennis.

**S:** Anyway I'll bear that in mind.

**Tejananda:** And now a question from Abhaya on the ordination conference.

**Abhaya:** It's a small point, reverting to your answer last night about the recommendations coming out of the conference with respect to the upgrading of criteria for acceptance for ordination. I think you said that you were all for upgrading the criteria but you must be careful not to make the road to ordination too narrow.

**S:** Yes I was thinking this over afterwards, and perhaps I could summarise it by saying by all means make it straighter but don't make it narrower.

**Abhaya:** What I was wondering was was it that you would prefer some of those recommendations to be scrubbed out or their wording modified? In other words what specifically do you think needs to be recommended at this point?

**S:** I'd need to go through all those recommendations quite carefully. They are recommendations aren't they for consideration, and perhaps I should leave it to the chapters to consider them, without as it were expressing much in the way of an opinion myself in the meantime.

**Abhaya:** You are happy for them to go out in that form?

**S:** I've looked through them very quickly. Let me have another look, but I'm quite sure that if chapters take them seriously they may well want for themselves to ( ) that they should be watered down or some recommendations were not accepted. You see what I mean? I think perhaps the chapters have to be left to, in a way, have that sort of freedom. Because as I've said they are only recommendations or perhaps bases for discussion at this stage. If every Order member, if all the chapters, are happy with them in their present form and are willing that they should be implemented, I suppose that's fair enough. But actually I rather doubt if they would be happy, you see. There might be quite a bit of watering down. But I'm concerned mainly that they should discuss them properly almost regardless of what conclusions they come to, and recognise their responsibility to discuss them seriously and give real thought to the matter. Not just leave it to all of you or leave it to me. But I will look through just to see. Over the weekend I'll look through just to see if there isn't anything that is obviously a bit too strongly worded or obviously out of place. Maybe someone should come and ask me if I've done that, because I've a lot to do this weekend. Just make sure I have done it and (send off?) those things. You've got until the 20th to get them into *Shabda*.

**Tejananda:** Now a question from Padmaraja on Guhyaloka.

**Padmaraja:** Bhante, I believe you've said that Guhyaloka could well function as your ashram.

**S:** I have used the term 'ashram' in this connection, yes, I admit.

**Padmaraja:** What do you mean by that?

**S:** Well in a way I was trying to avoid precision. [Laughter] In India an Ashram is just where the guru stays and where things just happen. It isn't very organised. People come, they meditate, they study, they ask questions. It's not all highly organised, and I think what I was feeling was that.... well perhaps two things; that perhaps we are getting or if we are not careful we will get a little too highly organised in this country. The British have a talent for organisation [Laughter] and it's not to be despised or underestimated, but it isn't everything. I thought perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea if you had a sort of spiritual centre, a retreat centre, where things were, in a sense, from the organisational point of view, not from the spiritual point of view, a bit more free and easy as it were. I also felt that it's in Spain, and we will be conducting from Guhyaloka I think some activities for the benefit of Spanish people, I gather from what I've read about the Spanish that they don't take quite so kindly to organisation as the British do, so I think we have to be very sensitive to that. Do you see what I mean?

I mean in India they're not quite used to a sort of replying to an advertisement and going along to the retreat and paying down their money and being given a definite place and all that sort of thing, it just doesn't happen like that. They sort of turn up and room is found for them and they'll give some donation before they leave if they've got money and some will stay for a few days and some a few months. It's not very highly organised, but it does all cohere, it does work, and you can have ashrams with thousands of people staying there for longer or shorter periods and it all works. Thousands of people quite literally in some of the bigger ones. And everyone is fed and everyone gets some instruction or inspiration. But it's not organised quite in the way that we do it in this country usually. You see what I mean?

So I suppose I was thinking - I haven't given much thought to this which is perhaps significant. Subhuti tried to get me to be much more specific recently but I didn't really feel able to be very much more specific, but I thought perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea to just do things in a somewhat different way at Guhyaloka. But I must say I'm not very clear about that different way. I was reminded, I think both by Subhuti and Vessantara that one couldn't be too free and easy where financial arrangements were concerned. I take that point but nonetheless I was wondering whether we couldn't do things in a more, what shall I say, non-organised way, not unorganised or disorganised but non-organised. Perhaps it does involve people taking more individual responsibility.

**Padmaraja:** To follow the question up Bhante, do you see that Guhyaloka will become the spiritual centre of the movement, for want of a better term?

**S:** I think all the centres should be spiritual centres. I think it's very dangerous to say 'well that's the spiritual centre, we don't have to improve [Laughter].... they've got responsibility for all the spiritual stuff. This is quite dangerous. Or Padmaloka is the administrative centre and Croydon's the cultural centre and Guhyaloka, that's the spiritual centre. Sorry Vajraloka! [Laughter] Well, that's the great meditation centre. So in the same way because say Vajraloka at present is say concentrating on meditation, it doesn't mean that other centres and communities are exempt. Not that you leave it to them or you take meditation seriously only when you go there. Maybe they'll be a relative difference of emphasis but all these things should figure prominently in all our centres. Otherwise you'll have a centre dedicated to spiritual friendship, well that's the place you go when you feel like being friendly! [Laughter] Perhaps they'll have as difficult a time as Vajraloka had a few years ago. Teams of people going round trying persuade people to go on these friendly retreats! [Laughter] A friendly centre, and coming up against a lot of resistance [Laughter] from Order members who want to do their own thing, if you see what I mean. Yes.

But we know that we're going to have the Tuscanies, as we call them at present, there at Guhyaloka. I'm going to be there and I'll probably stay a bit longer each year, but apart from that we don't really know anything. And people will be able to stay there for semi-solitariness. There will be solid cabins dotted around the property which is quite extensive. It won't be predominantly a meditation centre. People could come there and get on with their writing if they wanted to, or if they just wanted a rest or change, provided they just respected the conventions of the place, as it were. I've already instituted a few. I've asked Subhuti to make very sure of certain things right from the beginning. One is for instance no alcohol on the property at all, ever. That I've instituted right from the beginning there, and a few other things like that.

**Abhaya:** Will facilities for a word processor be there?

**S:** Hmm. It's very doubtful whether there'll be electric light. [Laughter] You'll need some pretty big batteries.

**Nagabodhi:** Subhuti was rigging up a generator so that he could use his.

**S:** [Laughs] Well I certainly won't have one. [Laughter] Quite happy not to. I've already planned just to sit out under a nice tree with a little wooden table and a pen and a pad. I'm quite happy with... even a quill. Even an eagle's feather - we have eagles there it seems. So, yes I think it gives us an opportunity, having Guhyaloka, just to experiment a bit with a slightly different sort of set up. We aren't sort of automatically committed to one particular type of pattern. I think we have to be quite aware of that, especially when we move to a foreign country and perhaps their ways of doing things may be rather different and we have to some extent to go along with their way of doing things, at least externally.

**Devaraja:** In the early Seventies I seem to remember that the general tendency was to be completely disorganised or unorganised. Perhaps disorganised is a better word. But that you were constantly pushing for people to be organised. Are you now trying to redress the balance perhaps?

**S:** I'm not sure that I wanted things to be more organised. I wanted things to be clearer I think. Directed or that people should be more responsible. I think that was the crux of it. Though often that did involve better organisation, yes. For instance if you call a council meeting, well the fact that you insist on everybody attending it doesn't mean that you're highly organised. You're just expecting people to be responsible. But obviously years ago the movement was very much smaller and the bigger you get the more - I won't say organisation, but the more co-ordination you need. For instance different centres have to be careful they don't all organise overlapping retreats. That means a certain amount of mutual consultation. Do you see what I mean? It's not that you're getting more highly organised in the negative sense.

**Tejananda:** Suvajra now with a question on learning from others.

**Suvajra:** I've been thinking about how you suggested to Kamalasila some time ago that he could perhaps learn in the movement from some people who have been doing vipassana retreats, and perhaps we could learn from other Buddhist groups. I was thinking first of all, are there any other Buddhist groups that you could actually point to where you think we could perhaps learn some things from? Then, second of all, are there any other groups - perhaps not Buddhist but religious groups - that we could learn from?

**S:** I'm not so sure about other Buddhist groups in the sense of groups. I'm thinking more in the sense of, with reference to, say, established Buddhist traditions, Eastern traditions. I have been thinking, as I mentioned to you a little while ago, about improving or enriching our pujas, and maybe we could get some ideas about that from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. They have built up that side or that aspect of their tradition over a period of hundreds of years. We're not going to do it in a day. So I think the movement as a whole is strong enough for some people to do what Kamalasila did. Just go out into, whether it's another group or another established Buddhist tradition, and just sort of bring in from that something which, adapted, will be useful and helpful to us. But I think it must be done with caution. It must be done by experienced people, and it mustn't be done out of a sort of restlessness. I found it quite interesting that after Kamalasila conducted his experiment which was done in full consultation with me and for very proper reasons, several other people at once wanted to go and do that same sort of thing. It was as though it was going to become a fashion. Do you see what I mean?,

and I wasn't very pleased about that. So it needs to be approached with caution. So anyone who feels that it would be useful to do that sort of thing or has any ideas should definitely consult with me, but it may well be - In fact I think probably the time has come - that we should reach out a little in this way, or at least begin to do so tentatively.

But not that it becomes a sort of fashion and people want to do it without really understanding why we're doing it. In much the same way some people are venturing into the academic field, which perhaps wouldn't have been desirable a few years ago, or even possible, but people who do venture into the academic field must be quite sure they keep up a very close and strong connection with the movement, especially the Order.

**Abhaya:** You used the phrase 'now that the movement is strong enough' just then. Was that the basis for your saying last night that maybe it would be a good idea for more people to go out and work in outside jobs?

**S:** I suppose yes, we have got much more of a nucleus now which we didn't really have before. A firm, relatively strong centre. Because if some people are, as it were, working outside in the world well it's quite demanding and they need some source of inspiration. For instance if they belong to a community well it needs to be a strong community so that when they go back at the end of a day's work into the community they really feel the benefit of it.

So there must be, as it were, a strong nucleus of the whole movement for people to have contact with. Otherwise if they are out in the world and there's no source that they can look to for support and inspiration they're going to be in a bad way after a while. So there is a connection between the two things, yes. We're strong enough, as it were, to support people who go forth into those different situations whether Buddhist or, as it were, secular, outside the movement. As a result of their experience within the movement already before they go out in that way, they themselves will be much stronger than most people were in the Order some years ago.

**Suvajra:** To come back to the second half of the question, do you still think the same holds true for other religions perhaps, learning from other religions can be viewed in the same sort of way, or could you think of some specific....

**S:** It might come later. I don't see it as coming as yet. Though I'm quite interested in pursuing those contacts myself personally, especially obviously Britain in a sense being a Christian country, with Christian groups and movements, especially those who have some interest in Buddhism. A woman came to see me the other day from Oxford, connected with an organisation of theirs. They are having a conference which may result in a book about attitudes towards Jesus, so she wanted to find out well what was the attitude of the FWBO or members of the FWBO towards Jesus. So I had a quite interesting two hour exchange with her and I think she got some useful ideas which she'll incorporate in a paper that she presents at this conference. It's a conference organised by the same body that Ratnaprabha attended last year and where he read a paper, so we begin to have a regular contact with them. I happened to mention that I had in mind for several years to write a little book on Buddhism and Christianity, just my personal impressions, and she said she thought that was of very great interest to herself and a lot of her friends. So there are these sort of possibilities, though I think very few Order members, if any perhaps besides myself, are in any way qualified to follow them up or to benefit from them. So I think perhaps it's as much as Order members can do at present to, in a few cases, make contact perhaps with other Buddhist groups or explore certain things that they are doing, hopefully to our own benefit.

**Aryamitra:** Is that the same for psychological groups?

**S:** Yes, this is sort of happening in a way because for instance I do feel that co-counselling has helped some people. They've learned a few techniques which they've found quite useful, even in dealing with people within the movement, or which they've found personally helpful, and several people have found the Alexander Technique helpful on a physical cum mental level. I've read a little bit of the literature which some of them have sent me and that seems to me quite fully in accordance with the spirit of Buddhism on its own level. So in a way these sort of explorations are already going on in a low key sort of way. It is happening. I think we have to exercise caution. I don't feel too happy when I hear of Order members consulting mediums and astrologers and things of that sort, as did happen to quite an extent last year or the year before. Some of you may remember I had occasion to pass some comments on all that.

But yes I'm quite in favour of Order members going out and exploring different fields and then feeding back into the movement whatever useful knowledge or experience they acquire. We did that with yoga to begin with didn't we. We've done it with karate. We're doing it I think with Aikido and one or two other things of that sort. We've done it as I said now with... well some people are into Homeopathy and no doubt something of that feeds back into the movement. Others are into co-counselling. Again something feeds back into the movement of general use.

So I think we can do this now, and while retaining I hope our own strong spiritual and Buddhist emphasis. Devamitra spoke recently in a little report of a - what was his expression? - a sort of rash of art breaking out among the women mitras and Friends around the LBC. He seemed a bit concerned about that. So I think we also have to watch that some of these interests don't become almost substitutes for the Dharma, rather than as accessories to the Dharma. I think that is what he was concerned about. So be careful that it isn't the second best that we opt for. The near enemy as it were. Yes, in principle I'm quite in favour of involvement with the arts but you have to be quite sure what we are doing and not divert attention or interest from the Dharma. Rather integrate the arts with the Dharma, which is quite a big task.

**Dhammarati:** I wonder what you think of some of the initiatives of for instance Trungpa's group with the ( ) college and the Shambala training.

**S:** I'm not quite sure. It's interesting. I'm not quite sure about some of the things that Trungpa's doing. I think in some ways he's the most interesting figure in the Tibetan Buddhist world. He is experimental, he is quite open to western culture, he is quite intelligent. He's even writing Ginsberg style poetry, [Laughter] I'm sure I couldn't do it, if you see what I mean. It must have taken a lot of hard work to learn to do that. [Laughter] He did have the benefit of Ginsberg's personal guidance. It was a very bold attempt on his part. I'm not happy about his pseudo-feudal set up. This Kalapa Court business and this Lady Diana business. The official title of his wife - The Lady Diana. I don't know where they got the idea from [Laughter] and all this pseudo-feudal business and I think Shambala is a bit wrapped up with that and a bit invoking of the old Tibetan mystique to wrap up something which isn't perhaps all that Buddhistic. I wonder. So I'm not too sure about the Shambala training. It's quite interesting in a way this cross between these middle class American attitudes with a dash of British feudalism and another little dash of Tibetan feudalism and a big strong dollop of Tibetan mysticism. It really is a quite interesting sort of brew or mixture. I don't think he's adventurous and interesting but just see how it all works out, I think, before following in his footsteps.

**Devaraja:** Do you think that the court thing is to counter pseudo-egalitarianism. Does that come across at all.

**S:** Well I think it's a very good idea to counter pseudo-egalitarianism with pseudo-hierarchy. They are the two extremes. And then there's these Vajra Guards! and all that sort of thing. I don't feel happy about that at all. Another famous guru apparently has been chased out the United States by gunmen. He's changed his name again. He used to be called Baba Free John. He's Love Ananda, Swami Love Ananda. He was going to take refuge near Guhyaloka when he changed his mind and went to Holland instead. Yes. And of course today's news is, at least I got the news today, that Ma Prem Ananda of was it Sushila, anyway the big lady who was Rajneesh's secretary has got a big jail sentence and fine for attempted murder. Oh yes. There's a dreadful story, there's a big report in *The Guardian*. Quite extraordinary. Three women all got jail sentences for attempted murder. They did actually try to murder, or were found guilty of trying to murder Rajneesh's doctor who was beginning to have an influence over him. And also for poisoning with Salmonella restaurants in their locality, apparently to incapacitate people so they couldn't vote in that day's elections, or something like that. But they were found guilty and sentenced.

**[End of side one side two]**

It's really extraordinary. Anyway that's all just in passing. So some of these groups do interesting things but let's not be too fascinated. Let's keep our sturdy British common sense!

**Dhammarati:** We got a couple of enquiries about Shambala and they charge an enormous amount of money. It's very lucrative, whatever it is.

**S:** Well I suppose it's a question ultimately in a way of whether you give people what they really need or whether you give them what they want. Sometimes it isn't always easy to distinguish between the two. And undoubtedly Shambala must be giving a lot of people what they want. Whether it's giving them what they need I think is another question. You could argue that giving people what they want is a skilful means and that eventually you'll be giving them what they need. I think it's very easy to get lost in that particular jungle. You need to be a very great bodhisattva to be able to do that.

Mr.Chen told me some quite amusing stories in this connection. I'm not going to repeat them. We'll have the next question.

**Voices (of disappointment):** Ah! [Laughter]

**S:** No I think I'd better not! I think I've told them on other occasions anyway.

**Tejananda:** This is a question from me. Do you see the conference of a visualisation practice as definitely integral to the ordination process, and what is your view with regards to non Order members doing vipassana practices and visualisation practices such as specifically the stupa visualisation?

**S:** I do see the visualisation practice as integral to ordination or commitment. But I have sometimes wondered whether the whole ordination process shouldn't be spaced out more. I have sometimes wondered that. I have sometimes wondered whether it wouldn't be a good idea to sort of extend the ordination process, and in a way the ordination itself, so that it is more spaced out and you have more

space in between each item, as it were, or each stage if you like, of the ordination. So that there's a better opportunity to consolidate the visualisation practice and to understand really what it is all about. I haven't really found out fully the context, though I've dropped hints and given bits and pieces of information from time to time. It's not really all been spelled out systematically like a lot of other things.

As for the second part of the question I know there's a lot of pressure sometimes from mitras, even Friends, to be given visualisation practice and some even take up spontaneously, and you don't want to curb people's enthusiasm or hold back their development, but sometimes it's as though people feel on the basis of a sort of pseudo-egalitarianism that well why shouldn't they do what Order members are doing. They think of it as a sort of thing that they're not being given that they are entitled to or have a sort of right to. So one needs to resist that. Though occasionally I do say that I think it's all right for somebody, not an Order member to do a visualisation practice, but it's very occasionally, and even then it's sometimes with a little bit of reluctance.

**Tejananda:** One of us thought that you'd said that the stupa visualisation shouldn't be done by mitras. Another said it was OK.

**S:** There might have been a bit of confusion some time ago. I think it's all right for mitras just to visualise the stupa or parts of it as a sort of lead up to visualising Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, but not to do the Six Element Practice. Though in one or two cases as an exception I have allowed mitras to do that if they are very near to ordination but that's very much an exception.

**Tejananda:** So you would be happy with any mitras being led through the visualisation.

**S:** I wouldn't say just any. One just needs to take a look at those mitras and just see where they are. I'm quite happy to leave it to the discretion of the Order member but that means his discretion, not that there's a sort of blanket permission, he doesn't even have to think about it, but if he takes a look at those actual mitras and he knows just where they are in their meditation and he knows perhaps they're approaching ordination and it wouldn't be a bad thing if they at least learned the technique of basic visualisation, then by all means let him lead them in those practices.

Just starting off with the yellow square or the silvery white disc. At least that. You don't have to do it all at once. You can spread it over weeks or even months. Let them, say for a few weeks, just visualise the yellow square, and then after that they can visualise the white disc for a few weeks and then you can get them to put the two together and do that for a few weeks. Do you see what I mean? You haven't got to give them everything all in one lesson or one class. Make it more systematic and thorough.

**Aryamitra:** Is the stupa practice when just visualised outside just a concentration aid?

**S:** I suppose it is really, yes. Though again you can make it the basis for reflection of a vipassana type because you bring it into existence and, having done that, you send it back into non-existence, as it were, and that can be the basis of reflection, but normally one sees it as a samatha type practice, yes.

**Aryamitra:** And the stupa visualised internally is definitely vipassana. Is that right?

**S:** No, I wouldn't say that. I myself have never taught that, though it's crept in here and there though.

This was some years ago. In fact some years ago there was quite a lot of discussion about it, possibly on one of the Tuscanies, I'm not sure. But yes, that also can be done though it isn't something I've concentrated on or given much encouragement to. Maybe that is something could explore sometime. I don't know that it's a very common practice in the Buddhist world anyway.

**Vajrananda:** Do you give the prostration and visualisation of Padmasambhava to mitras?

**S:** Very few. I'm just trying to remember. Recently one or two people asked and I think I have allowed one or two people, one or two mitras, to do the prostration practice and recitation of the mantra without the visualisation. But broadly speaking, not. It's a fine point in a way. You have to try and see whether the mitra just wants to be like an Order member and doesn't see why he shouldn't do what they're doing, or whether he does have a genuine feeling for the practice and he's approaching ordination and could really benefit from doing it. This is what one really needs to see or to ascertain.

I suppose it must be a bit difficult for some people to understand why they shouldn't do these simple visualisations when almost any month of the year they can go along to some gathering of Tibetan Buddhists in London and receive straight away the highest Tantric initiations. It must seem a bit odd to them. We need to spell out more the path of regular steps.

**Tejananda:** Suvajra has a question on Bodhisattva spirit.

**S:** Probably the more the better! But don't try to predetermine its direction.

**Suvajra:** Without trying to predetermine its direction, you mentioned last year in our Tuscany question and answer sessions that you thought perhaps we needed to give a specific emphasis at some point perhaps in our movement on the Bodhisattva spirit. You were thinking maybe even a puja, because we don't specifically recite....

**S:** Yes perhaps I should modify that. Perhaps I should say that we ought to bring out more fully the altruistic implications of the Going for Refuge. Otherwise it rather gives the impression, as is the case in the Mahayana tradition itself that the Bodhicitta is something added to the Going for Refuge, as it were go a stage further and you leave the Going for Refuge behind in a sense. I think it's more a question of exploring more fully or bringing out more fully the implications of Going for Refuge itself. But, yes certainly perhaps spell out much more fully and clearly those, what I've called, altruistic implications, and then bring in the Bodhisattva Ideal or the Bodhisattva spirit as exemplifying that but not as, as it were, going beyond the Going for Refuge itself. Do you see what I mean?

**Suvajra:** I see what you mean. How would you do it? How would you actually bring it in as a specific emphasis? By common recitation or by....

**S:** I think it boils down to awareness. People have got to be aware of other people and of their needs. I think it's as simple as that. A bit of imagination. A bit less self centredness. Some people seem to have it naturally, others just don't have it. Basically it just means thinking less about oneself and more about other people in the true sense. It's really basically quite simple. I think there can be a sort of almost egocentric preoccupation with one's 'own development'. I think in the FWBO we are a little prone to that sometimes.

\_\_\_\_\_: (unclear)

**S:** Good. Letters of gold please! [Pause]

**Dhammarati:** It's maybe getting a bit specific but I've certainly been aware around the LBC of some people who get to a point where they feel they have to have a more or less prolonged time where they're dealing with themselves and their own mental states and resist quite vociferously any pressure to be involved in classes very much, in terms of supporting or being involved in courses. Do you think there is a place for this or do you think that....

**S:** You don't necessarily have to be involved in centres and co-ops to be involved with other people or to be concerned with other people. I think sometimes, yes, a person needs say time for meditation, time to reflect on things. I think one still has to be careful that this doesn't become an over preoccupation with one's own psychological states. Sometimes the best way of dealing with say your negative mental states, if you have them, is just by going out of yourself and concerning yourself more with other people and doing things for other people. Otherwise your mental state becomes a sort of witches brew that you're constantly stirring, and perhaps stirring up.

If say someone's suffered a bereavement or they've had a sudden rather drastic realisation about themselves, well they need time and space to consider that. But apart from things like that I think people have to be careful that they're not self indulgent and turning over their own subjective mental state more than they really need to do. You probably have got more than your fair share of them around the LBC. Anyway that's part of your job as chairman to deal with them! I don't envy you the job I must say! [Laughter] You need loads of patience, loads of optimism! [Laughter] It would be nice to have lots and lots of healthy extroverts around wouldn't it!

How are we going? How many left.

**Tejananda:** This the penultimate question. Devaraja on expansion.

**Devaraja:** What areas of the world do you think it is a priority for us to set up in? What specific areas would you like us to get into as quickly as possible?

**S:** Announcing very much off the cuff, I think perhaps those areas that you ought to get into anyway and which, if we don't get into now might be closed to us. Just think if we'd been starting to get into India four or five years later, what difficulties we would have been in now. We've just about scraped in, we've just about got a dozen or so Indian Order members who could carry on if it absolutely came to that. It wouldn't have been the case some years ago. So I think we need just to do a sort of survey. For instance Hong Kong is a case that comes to mind. Maybe we should get in there, but I can't really say much. But that sort of perhaps general principle. Those areas which, other factors being equal, might be closed to us in a few years' time. I'm really glad that we're getting into Spain now. It seems just the right time. I wish we had more Order members to work in Spain. It seems potentially a very fruitful situation. We had a very positive response from existing Spanish Buddhist groups and individuals, and there's not really much in the way of Buddhism there at present. It's only over the last two or three years anything at all has got moving there. There's a freedom of religion law now. There's no difficulty with the church as there would have been even a few years ago. From Spain hopefully we can launch into South America.

Perhaps we ought to get more started in the States. We haven't been all that successful so far. Perhaps it needs more Order members. More of a presence, but we're really very short of people. We're

certainly short of capable pioneering people. There's eastern Buddhist countries too. We seem to be having quite an opening for us in Sri Lanka. Asvajit's doing well. There doesn't seem to be much difficulty there about visas if you're there for the sake of the Dharma, especially if you're studying it.

\_\_\_\_\_ : How are things going in the States?

**S:** I don't really have any information perhaps that you don't have. I haven't heard much from Manjuvajra recently. I had a couple of long long letters some time ago. I'm expecting first hand information quite soon from Vajraketu as he and Kulananda have gone to a trade fair I think in New York and would be spending some time also with Manjuvajra at Aryaloka. So I've asked Vajraketu to come and see me immediately afterwards when he gets back. But they have difficulties because again this visa question has come up. Dayaratna's been refused a visa as you know. Dave Keefe is back after six months. They don't have many Americans. There are one or two good chaps now staying at Aryaloka but we've not really done very well.

**Padmaraja:** Are you still thinking of going out there to do seminars?

**S:** I'm thinking of going out there. I wanted to go out this Summer but I haven't finished my book. I'm thinking of going out there more just for the sake of contact. I had a letter a few days ago from Ann Park who wants definitely to get involved with the FWBO again and is willing to come over here if necessary and help to support something in Santa Barbara in California. She must have a big range of contacts. I had a long, very serious, letter from her just a few days ago. Some of you may remember her. She was a colleague of Vajradaka's as regards massage, that sort of thing. She has a very flourishing centre and movement of this sort in Santa Barbara. But I am carefully keeping up all my American contacts. I've got quite a few of them actually here and there, so my idea is just initially to go over and just spend a couple of weeks at Aryaloka and have as much contact as I can with people. Do a little bit of visiting. I'm not thinking so much at this stage of seminars or lectures. That might come in connection with another visit. It all depends on my health and things like that. But I am definitely intending to go.

I mustn't forget the UK centres. Some of those I've not even seen yet. I'm going to do a little travelling around early next year before I get down to another stint of literary work. I don't even dare to, say, promise to come to Glasgow. I've been expected there for so many years now, but I probably will get up there. And of course I have to see the people in Birmingham and I have to see Taraloka. Accrington. I've not seen any of these places yet, what to speak of Manchester and Bristol which I have visited before. There's Edinburgh too now. So I am planning to get around early next year. Maybe early Spring.

I've got one or two little ideas. Perhaps I should mention - that was the penultimate question but I'll just make a little mention now - I am thinking quite seriously, I've discussed this with Subhuti, of giving a definitely last performance of my old slide show. [Laughter] I've been reluctant for years now to show it. I showed it so many times years ago that people had got a bit tired of those particular slides I think, but Subhuti feels that there's a whole new generation of even Order members who've never seen, and also this coming winter is the 20th anniversary of that trip of mine to India. When I left the Hampstead Vihara and went to say goodbye to my friends and in the course of that trip I got this famous letter, 'We don't want you back' from the trustees, and then I decided well we need a new Buddhist movement. So it's exactly twenty years or it will be twenty years this winter because I went in October and came back in March, so this is a record of my tour. There's me with the ex-Untouchables which is historic now, and there's Dhardo Rimpoche, there's Lama Govinda, there's the

Dalai Lama, there's Buddhagaya, there Sarnath, there's Kashyapji.

So I was thinking that as part of my little tour, in each of the bigger centres which I visit I'd like to just, among other things, show these slides for the last time as it were, give a little commentary, because, yes, they have some intrinsic interest for people who have never seen them and also they of quite historic interest now, twenty years having gone since they were taken. So I thought this was one of the things I could do say in Manchester, in Glasgow and maybe in Bristol even. So I just sort of give you due notice.

**Nagabodhi:** Can I just ask how many people here have seen those slides?

**S:** Even the comparatively aged chairmen. Yes. Anyway.

**Padmaraja:** The would make quite a good booklet.

**S:** Oh there are some lovely pictures there, yes. It's just a question of money. This miserable substance that we need more of! [Laughter]

**Padmaraja:** Would you be prepared to write a text for it or do you have letters going back to that period that could be published alongside the pictures, or how would you envisage it?

**S:** I just don't know. I'd need notice of that question. The main thing would be the pictures. Well maybe if I do give the show then people may come up with some ideas. There are some very good shots there, you may remember.

**Padmaraja:** Taken by Terry Delamere.

**S:** That's right. There are a few others. There were some of my trip to Italy and Greece with him which took place twenty years ago this summer. No, twenty years ago last summer. Just a few. Delphi and places like that. And then of course on the way back from India a few taken in Egypt. The pyramid and camels! [Laughter] I have sometimes shown those.

**Nagabodhi:** You on a camel?

**S:** Oh no! [Laughter] The famous tourist shot. The camel driver kissing his camel. Anyway let's carry on.

**Tejananda:** The final question is from Devaraja again and it concerns yourself.

**Devaraja:** What are you working on at the moment. What are the projects and issues you are most concerned with or thinking the most about at the moment and what projects do you have in mind for the future?

**S:** It's not an easy question to answer because so many ideas go through my mind. At present of course I am working on my, well small book as it has become now, 'Ambedkar and Buddhism', which I had hoped to have finished a couple of months ago. But in a way I'm not sorry that it's expanded because - this is why it has taken longer, it has expanded - it'll be I think 65-70,000 words. That's my latest estimate. And I hope tomorrow morning to finish Chapter Eight, which leaves me only with the very short concluding chapter which is like a postscript, and there's a couple of pages

to be added to Chapter One which I have left until I completed the whole book, and then a bit of proof reading and a few other odds and ends and that's it, and the rest is up to Nagabodhi and his team. And we hope to have it out in time for Ambedkar's 30th death anniversary on the 6th December, and I've already discussed with Dhammarati and others the possibility of our observing that day. We won't be able to do it on the actual day because that'll be the first day of a National Order Weekend but it probably will be possible to celebrate it a few days later in a public hall in London with the LBC making arrangements, with a symposium of short talks by people with a special connection with India, that is Order members, with me in the chair. And if all is well and we can't make definite promises, we can only hope, if all is well and the book is actually out and ready by that time, we shall launch the book then. So that'll be something of interest for hope everybody who can get to it.

Then other projects. Literary projects. Oh dear, there's so many things! I've got my memoirs to finish. I'm half way through volume two of the memoirs. I've planned volume three and volume four. I know exactly what's going to go into those volumes, but it suggests a lot of work writing, as well as doing other things. I have got in mind, or planned in my mind, this book on Buddhism and Christianity which I think I could do pretty quickly, and there's a series of talks which will make a book on Buddhism and Culture - I'm very keen on doing that. Then I really would like to write another big book on Buddhism embodying all my latest thinking systematically but that's going to be very difficult. I've got ten or twelve years work here, you see. And at my age you count the days perhaps rather than the years, but I shall do what I can. These are my literary projects, which I must admit are rather uppermost in my mind.

And then when Subhuti comes back I'll get together with him and discuss various matters to do with the Order and giving the Order in a way more of a structure and trying to create better arrangements for making decisions and sounding out the Order about various matters. And of course Subhuti is I hope going to very soon produce this little booklet on the Order. I've asked him to make that his priority. He's going to try and work on it in the mornings at Guhyaloka. I want just a booklet about the Order, an illustrated booklet, as a sort of companion to the co-ops booklet. Because there's a lot of people around in the Buddhist world especially who just don't really have much idea what we are as an Order and I want to give more and more prominence to the Order and what it stands for, what it is. So this will be a 4,000 word, well illustrated booklet which we can print perhaps quite a few thousand copies of, and which will make it clear to everybody what we really stand for, which most people outside the FWBO, even some inside it, are quite vague about actually. So there's that aspect of things.

Then of course I really need to do a bit of travel. Get around to the centres more and have more contact with people. I'm going to take one or two seminars. Vajrananda's given me some dates which look all right at first glance, but I'll just check, getting together with all the chairmen again for a week perhaps, and with chapter convenors for ten days.

I'm always reading and reflecting on things. There's quite a lot of lengthy book reviews I'd like to do, but I think there's no space for them in *'Golden Drum'* which is just not big enough and maybe not the right sort of thing to accommodate them. Sthiramati's been expressing interest in an annual. I'm also very interested in that, that we should bring out an annual. Like *'Crystal Mirror'*, that sort of thing, an annual publication where we have rather in depth type articles and reviews of a distinctively FWBO sort of flavour, which would appeal perhaps to people way outside the movement who had a more intelligent interest in Buddhism. Sthiramati at present is very busy but I know he is very interested in this and will probably be the right man to do it. So I could contribute

quite lengthy reviews to something of this sort. I have in mind to write a review of the new life of Alan Watts. That is full of interesting material where one could make some very relevant points.

There's also a couple of anniversaries I'd like to celebrate next year. I don't know if I will be able to do it. I've mentioned the twentieth anniversary of these slides, but there's a couple of others. I don't know if you've thought of them, but early next year will also be the 30th anniversary of the publication of The '*Survey*', but I'm hoping - I'm not making any promises - but I'd like to write a paper, the '*Survey*' thirty years after, and connecting what I've written with some of my current thinking in the form of a paper. If I manage to write it in time I could read this at all the different centres before it is published. This will be of interest more to Order members and mitras, maybe a few Friends, so it would be just given at the centre. One wouldn't need to hire a hall, and I'd be quite happy to read it in a number of different places before it was actually published.

And then of course - another thing I've thought is - there's another anniversary for me coming up next year, and that is the fortieth anniversary of my Going Forth. So I'd really like to produce a paper which I would read to Order members and others just looking back and talking about what that meant and how it ties up with our present thinking about things. But this all involves a lot of work and I hope I can get around to doing something.

So there's lots to do. It's just a pity that when you reach a sort of sensible age and do know a few things well it's almost time to start saying goodbye to the world as it were, just as you're beginning to get into your stride! So don't waste time.

**Aryamitra:** Just live a long life.

**S:** I'll do my best but I don't know whether it's in my hands, so to speak, apart from taking sensible precautions and leading a regular life and not too many late nights or wild parties! [Laughter] I do my best! We'll just have to see.

**Devaraja:** Speaking of wild parties, would you be prepared to read us some of your work in progress tomorrow evening?

**S:** Work in progress. I'm just trying to think what might be a suitable extract. I'm not sure that I can think of one. I'd have to just look through because most of the chapters are really too long. Work in progress being the Ambedkar book.

**Suvajra:** The memoirs.

**S:** Memoirs? Yes I suppose they are in progress in a sense, though I haven't done any work on them for two years! I really don't know. I'd have to look through. I might be able to find something. Oh, I know. I'll wriggle out of it and do it the easy way. I'll read you a poem since I have a captive audience! [Laughter] I'll read a poem. It's my long poem. Probably the longest poem I've written. I wrote it last year and nobody's seen it yet. It's called 'Hercules and the Birds'. Yes. I wrote it in that same sort of Hiawatha meter that I wrote 'The Caves of Bhaja'. So it'll take ten to fifteen minutes to read. I can give you that, yes. And if everybody agrees that it's just too awful I'll just sit on it and [Laughter] make you promise not to say anything about it to anybody, but I produced this in Tuscany after my visit to Naples. You'll see the point of the connection I hope. I'll see if there are any other little oddments but I'm not sure.

OK.

There's one matter I wanted to raise. It's only really raising it or airing it. I don't have any definite views. It's something that, in a way, just arose today. Something I heard about on the radio actually. It's to do with this question of violence, which is quite a problem nowadays. For instance there is football hooliganism and there's a lot more violence in society in Britain than there was even a few years ago, and there was a letter read out on the news programme which made a very interesting suggestion which I felt merited consideration. The writer of the letter connected it with music. He said - he seemed to be a not very young man - and he was recalling the introduction of rock and roll and the scenes of violence that occurred when rock and roll was introduced. In the hall where that sort of music was playing, scenes of violence which had not occurred in connection with any other type of music, and in his view 'punk', that is even more violent and his view is that this kind of music is definitely having a psychological effect on young people and actually making them more violent, and he said that he noticed there was a definite difference between people under twenty and people over twenty, because people under twenty had been subject to the influence of this punk rock music. Now this made me think because you know what Plato said about music, you know what Confucius said about music and its effect. Plato was of the opinion that music should be controlled, and there's this famous story about Confucius, I think in the analects, that when he was travelling around he started approaching the borders of a certain state and he just stopped and listened. He could hear in the distance the music of that state and he said, 'No, we won't go there, that's an immoral state'. He could tell it from the music. It's a quite remarkable story. I really thought perhaps there's something in this. I just wondered what other people thought, just off the cuff. Whether there could be anything in this, that these kinds of music are, as it were definitely stimulating people to be violent or arousing emotions of violence.

Well, I don't think there's much doubt that they do arouse those emotions. The question is whether those emotions, having been aroused in that way, do actually find expression in physical violence in society.

**Dhammarati:** One point is that it's a very blanket term, rock music. The music that's been played since the fifties actually covers quite an emotional spectrum. Even in the fifties there'd be quite a difference between for instance Little Richard and Buddy Holly. The music would be different and...

**S:** But in a way one doesn't really need to make those distinctions because he is referring to occasions on which the audience at a music festival of some kind was stimulated to violence by the type of music being played, so that suggests that among all the various types of music played that are at least some types, or perhaps even just one type, which does have that definite effect, whether that music bears this label or that label. There may be some kinds of... I mean jazz doesn't seem to have that sort of effect, nor does classical music. People who go to the Proms become very lively and even a bit rowdy but, as far as I know, they never become violent. But there is a type of music or types of music which do seem to stir up those sort of emotions in people.

**Suvajra:** With punk rock it's hard to separate the music from what actually is being expressed in the music vocally. A lot of anarchy and...

**S:** Abuse. Right yes.

**Sona:** Presumably there is a connection between music being played in concerts on the radio and so on with a growth in violence.

**S:** Well the writer of that particular letter believed so. To me it seems plausible but I think it needs further exploration. Because you know I have been uneasy for some time about.... the reason I've thought it important that Order members and mitras and others should be careful what sort of music they listen to because music does have a very powerful effect, and even be very careful what sort of films they go to see. I think I've touched on that, or what sort of TV they watch.

**[End of tape three tape four]**

A mitra happened to mention to me a little while ago that he, sort of semi inadvertently watched a film on TV and for days and days after that he was experiencing quite horrible images. He just couldn't get rid of them, really quite frightful ones which he'd seen on the screen. Violence and death and corpses.

**Dhammarati:** There's an obvious parallel that you can draw between the music in the sixties for instance when everything was very soft, and then like 1976, '77, when punk rock was in its peak, that thing called social flavour had changed, unemployment had become very high and the optimism of the sixties was tied with the economic prosperity of the sixties and in a way the music expresses frustration perhaps as much as it causes it.

**S:** For instance there was unemployment and there was frustration in the thirties which I can just about remember but you just had ballroom dancing then. *[Laughter]*

**Nagabodhi:** They did have a war in the thirties!

**S:** Yes but that war wasn't due to employment or social frustration. Even the songs that became popular during the war, the First World War, were not songs of violence.

**Nagabodhi:** But in the culture at large before the First World War - I don't know about the Second World War - was there not a sort of fragmentation of values in music and in the arts which perhaps was correlative with punk rock. If you look from visual art to music, atonal music and so on which in some way.....

**S:** Yes, this is something I thought about when I heard that letter read on the radio, because I remember reading years ago something to this effect, that players in orchestras made the point that after playing Beethoven or Mozart or Schubert, they felt really good but after they played some modern composers their nerves were really quite jangled. I think perhaps there was something of that sort creeping into the musical world on that sort of serious level as it were. It crept into visual arts. It's quite interesting last year when I went down to London I saw that exhibition of modern German art. It was very interesting to see the inter-war art, as though the artist did have visions of the shape of things to come, some of them sort of quite prophetic. But I think they were definitely expressions rather than incitements, but it seems to me that things like punk perhaps are more incitements than expressions, though they are expressions to some extent.

But I'm concerned more with this point - there's much we can do perhaps to change society on that scale, not at the moment - but at least Order members should be very careful what sort of influences they expose themselves to. This is really that point that I'm getting at.

**Suvajra:** I don't know if this might throw any light on the picture. I noticed last year when I had a

particular mitra staying in our community who liked playing a particular sort of music, I don't know exactly what the name of the type of music is called, but whenever he played that sort of music everybody in our community became sexually restive.

**S:** Oh we must find out what it was and ban it! *[Laughter]*

**Suvajra:** Sexually restless, but we discussed it in the community that that music had a particular beat and rhythm that it was having was stirring them up in that way. I wonder if there's a connection between music that does that and violence.

**S:** Well it could be that the same music produces both effects or it could be that there are, as it were, two different types of music producing the two different effects or in some cases there could be an overlap I suppose. But music is very very powerful in its effect. So is TV now.

**Mangala:** In this connection there's been some research in America which I was reading about and apparently a big sort of survey was done and it have come up quite conclusively with proof, as it were, that pornography actually gives rise to violence as well. Although apparently a previous inquiry - I don't know how many years earlier - actually came up with completely the opposite, but this latest one definitely says that pornography - there is a definite connection between that and violence. So I just wondered if there was anything between that and music.

**S:** Well it could be then that music which is sexually stimulating does also stimulate violence. It is quite possible because in the case of men - I'm not so sure about women - sex and violence are very closely connected. You could even say that for many men sex is a form of violence or involves at the very least a strong element of violence. Using the term violence rather loosely.

Perhaps people should just be mindful of their listening habits, especially in communities.

**Nagabodhi:** Presumably we also have the duty to society to feed them the opposite.

**S:** Oh yes indeed. Right. A lot of that sort of thing is happening. There are all sorts of fine classical music concerts all over the place, but I'm sure far more people do listen to rock and punk and all that sort of thing, especially young people. I couldn't also help thinking of the Indian Raga system where each Raga is associated with a definite mood and is intended to induce and cultivate that mood. The Shingara, the erotic as it were, there is the heroic, the terrific. You had the same thing in Greek music. Milton refers to these in his poetry - the Dorian mood, which is heroic, and the Lydian mood which is very indolent and indulgent. The Frigian mood which is very exciting. Maybe it's the Frigian mood that is predominating these days because the Frigian mood is associated with emotional arousal, ecstasy, violence, the Dionysiac cult and all those sort of things.

So it just suggests that we need to be mindful in so many areas. Really there's not much point almost in trying to practise meditation and lead a spiritual life when you've got rock music, punk rock, blasting away at you all day, sort of thing. You've got to be very careful if you're working. I do know, even I've noticed here at Padmaloka sometimes, people doing physical work, bricklaying or something of that sort, they like to have music on but it's usually of this rather violent type. I used to notice this sometimes in the old candle making days. You go into the candle workshop and there's some quite crude music blasting away. I think some people did become aware of this and started playing Beethoven. I think even Beethoven wasn't so popular as some kinds of music.

**Devaraja:** Maybe it's just a side issue but sometimes just the type of instrumentation that's actually used in the music can actually dramatically change the effect. It's not even a case of things like beat. My own experience on a couple of occasions of listening to steel band music. Actually it's just the gentleness of the sound that has a very buoyant, very happy feel.

**S:** Well this is basically what one must be aware of. The state in which the music leaves you.

All right then let's leave it there and have this wee poetry reading tomorrow.

**[End of tape four tape five]**

Before I read my poem just a couple of bits of business. The first arising out of the conference on the ordination process for me. Just one or two comments and queries.

Under 'Recommendations to the mitra convenors', clause seven isn't completely clear - 'that there be four bi-monthly ordination request retreats organised on a regional basis'. Four bi-monthly ordination request retreats. What does one mean by four bi-monthly?

**Suvajra:** Who was there?

**Kamalasila:** I was there. Doesn't that mean four retreats every two months? It doesn't follow does it!

**S:** No, it doesn't! If you say.... All right, do you mean four a year to be held at not less than an interval of two months?

\_\_\_\_\_ : I think that's what we meant?

**S:** What does one mean? So could that be rephrased more clearly by somebody?

**Vajrananda:** Is it possible that those retreats don't include the ordination request retreats that are extant, so that there'll be four bi-monthly ones in between the two that are every six months.

**S:** Hmm? So that means there are in the course of a year six bi-monthly retreats, out of which two are of that kind and four of this kind.

**Vajrananda:** Yes.

**S:** So what you mean is out of the six bi-monthly ordination request retreats, four should be organised on a regional basis etc., etc. Is that the meaning? So who could take responsibility for rewriting that? Because it says rewrite for *Shabda* so who is doing the rewriting?

**Suvajra:** I could do it.

**S:** All right. So shall I just mark it?

**Suvajra:** Yes.

**Dhammarati:** Also there are weekend retreats.

**S:** Yes, 'Recommendations to chapters'. For instance 'that Order chapters discuss why there is such a general reluctance'. So how is that going to be, as it were, implemented? What is the machinery, because usually Aloka circulates chapters, doesn't he, in consultation with me, asks them to discuss the particular topic, report back to him or to me or to both of us by a certain date. So what's going to be the machinery in this case? Otherwise one will recommend something. The recommendation may be adopted but there's no machinery it seems for actually carrying out the recommendation.

**Kamalasila:** If this all goes in Shabda, where the reports of the discussions to be sent?

**S:** Well it's all right in the case of mitra convenors because there will be minutes kept of the mitra convenors' meeting and discussion, won't there? But in the case of the chapters, what is the machinery for actually getting them to discuss something which it has been agreed they should discuss?

**Sona:** Shouldn't the machinery be that presumably Devamitra approaches you and asks for your approval to send this out, in which case he may ask Aloka to....

**S:** All right. That could be one way. So maybe an N.B. could be added there. [Pause]

This first paragraph of the 'Recommended upgrading of criteria for ordination', where it begins 'it must be understood that in putting forward some of the following recommendations we are not trying to ( ) Order members', I suggest that that whole clause is underlined, so that perhaps it will be communicated that you really do mean it. It's not just included just a sort of sop to the individualists.

Yes, then about the question of dole and being in debt. Listen to this - 'That because it frequently is symptomatic of a lack of ability to take responsibility upon oneself, we do not recommend for ordination or the ordination course a mitra who is on the dole'. So to begin with you admit when you say that it's frequently symptomatic of a lack of ability to take responsibility for oneself. The fact that you say that it is frequently symptomatic means that sometimes it is not. So therefore you recognise the possibility that someone may be on the dole but nonetheless may be quite responsible. Nonetheless you are saying that even he shouldn't be allowed to go to Tuscany. So the conclusion doesn't quite follow from the premise, does it. So that should be amended.

**Suvajra:** Could you suggest an amendment? [Laughter]

**S:** 'We do not necessarily recommend for ordination'. It could be something like that. Or 'We exercise particular care in recommending for ordination'. 'We exercise particular care in recommending'.

**Devaraja:** 'Dole' is actually an inaccurate term. It should be 'Social Security'. There's a difference between Unemployment Benefit and Social Security.

**S:** Also Housing Benefit. Housing Benefit presumably is relatively acceptable.

**Devaraja:** Unemployment Benefit only continues for a certain time after the person's.... It's actually what you're completely entitled to because you've paid out insurance while you were working to cover a period of unemployment, but it ceases after a year, I think, and then you go onto Social Security.

**Abhaya:** Supplementary Benefit.

**S:** Because 'Dole' is simply a handout. It's a Latin word, isn't it. Perhaps that should be made clear. Social Security, and in brackets, i.e. NOT such and such and such and such.

**Devaraja:** With Unemployment Benefit you've paid out the insurance whilst you were working. You are just...

**S:** Recouping.

**Devaraja:** Yes, just recouping.

**S:** Yes.

**Vajrananda:** I think there may be problems ..... it's the recommendations of a committee that all of which the people are present. That why it kept its original form. It wasn't our recommendation.

**S:** Well in that case perhaps we should just add an appendix or whatever to say that the chairmen suggest such and such modifications to clauses such and such and such and such, and then those modifications can also be taken into consideration. It's clear what the mitra convenors are recommending. It's also clear with certain reservations what the chairmen are.... Is this already as amended by the chairmen?

**Abhaya:** Yes.

**S:** Ah.

**Suvajra:** And almost the whole committee apart from Vajraketu.

**S:** Right. Yes because you mustn't modify really recommendations made by some other body.

**Sona:** Since you have to approve it just to put it out to discussion in the chapters could you recommend the amendments?

**S:** I suppose I could, but the chairmen have already made some modifications, haven't they?

**Kamalasila:** You're making some recommendations now.

**S:** Yes, and you presumably accept them and therefore I'm making them your own as it were. So maybe we'd better go ahead with that rider, as it were, a rider from the chairmen or whatever you like to call it. And maybe you should restore then their original document and just add. Did it come to you in a typed form or...

**Suvajra:** The original document's quite different. Almost the whole thing is worded much much more narrowly, but all of who were on the conference, apart from Vajraketu, agree with the chairmen that it was too narrow.

**S:** Well perhaps you should add a little note to the effect that this is what has happened. To make it quite clear and above board, so to speak, and then add these particular modifications. Give the history of it.

**Dhammarati:** The only objection I'd have to that is in a way I've been anticipating a more detailed discussion at chapter level and we've only had limited time to discuss it here, so if it goes out, as it were, saying that the chairmen recommend these amendments, it sort of implies that apart from that the document's been, as it were.....

**S:** No, no. There can be something added when Aloka or whoever sends out the request, that people are free to discuss it completely, because we're just modifying, more or less, evident absurdities. No more than that.

**Dhammarati:** But doesn't it sort of imply, as it were, that if we've made these amendments and we haven't made others then by implication.....

**S:** Well if you think there's going to be any danger of misunderstanding well let it be spelled out that chapters are perfectly free to say anything they please or make any recommendations or modifications or additions that they please. That can be spelled out. Make some kind of note of that so that when it does come to me I do remember that.

**Kamalasila:** We could even say explicitly that the chairmen don't necessarily go along with all these points.

**S:** Right, you can even say that, yes. But you're just making these amendments of points that are evidently not clear.

'Finally, we ask that each chapter of the Order spend at least one meeting discussing the recommendations'. At least one meeting. That suggests that you could do it in one meeting. Well you'll all be present in a chapter. In your own chapters in your individual capacities make sure that it is all properly discussed.

I think those were the only points I really had. I mean points that seemed obviously unclear. Every one could be discussed. This isn't the time or place.

Righto then.

Then the other matter was with regard to something I discussed with Subhuti and I wondered whether he'd brought it up with you. Apparently he hasn't but for this you have to take off your chairmen's hats. Just in your capacity as senior, responsible Order members, because this is about next year's Order Convention.

What I suggested to Subhuti when we originally discussed the matter was this. That in the course of the convention, there should be discussion of certain matters affecting the Order as a whole, or even the movement, and I felt that the discussion should take this form, or the structure of the discussion should be such. Obviously there's no question of everybody joining in one great big discussion group. So what I felt was that the convention should be broken up into a number of different groups, and each group should have one or more topics for discussion depending on the number of sessions, but in each group there should be, so far as possible, one person from every chapter. So supposing,

just for the sake of argument, supposing you had a hundred Order members and there were ten groups, you would have say those ten different groups each discussing one separate topic, and assuming that those hundred Order members came from ten different chapters, you could have a discussion group consisting of ten Order members, each one of whom would be from a different chapter. That would be the model. It wouldn't be quite so symmetrical or tidy as that, but I think it would near enough. Do you see what I mean?

And each discussion group should elect its own chairman just to keep things, as it were under control, and have a recorder who would be responsible for writing up a report of the discussions for eventual publication in *Shabda*.

So Subhuti writing to me suggests topics, because I asked him to think about topics. So this is what he has written. *'You also asked me to think about topics to be discussed at the Order convention next year. I have a list of about fourteen topics, no doubt more could be thought of. If necessary I could expand upon these to indicate areas within each which should be discussed.'* *Unity of the Order/Structure of the Order. Meditation in the Order/Movement. Study. Ceremony. Right Livelihood. Communities. Art and Culture. Politics and World Affairs. The expansion of the movement. Teaching of the Dharma. Training for ordination. Kalyana Mitrata. Leadership in the Order. Responsibility. The Order and the Buddhist world. Sex and relationships/celibacy. Communication in the Order.*

*I hope these are the sort of topics you were thinking of. If so I can work them out in more detail with a proper title and an outline for each. I suggest that this list be circulated to chapters in advance of the convention, so that each chapter can cover as many topics as possible. Smaller chapters could join together. Each group would have a convenor who would be responsible for initiating and guiding discussion. There will also be a recorder in each who could make a report of the principal points made. If the sessions are only to take place over two or three days, then the discussion can probably be allowed to develop under the guidance of the convenor. If the groups are to meet for longer periods then a more detailed programme for each group would have to be worked out. Let me know what you think and I will work out a plan of action.'*

Do you get the broad general idea?

How many days are we having the Convention for? Ten days. So in this way we'd get a number of broad issues discussed and reported on by a number of groups containing representatives of all, or if not, most, of the chapters. This is one part of the programme. There will also no doubt be lectures and pujas and metta bhavanas and so on.

**Devaraja:** So the idea is that there's a preparatory discussion in the chapters themselves on those issues?

**S:** No I don't think that was the idea. It certainly wasn't my idea, but supposing a particular chapter has got only five members, well then they must discuss which particular discussion groups they would want to send their five members to, because they wouldn't be able to cover them all. Because say there would be ten, so a particular chapter might be more interested in certain topics than others and prefer that its members should attend the groups discussing those topics rather than certain others.

**Devaraja:** What's the outcome that you hope have occurred from the discussions? Does it constitute a decision by the Order?

**S:** No, it's just discussion, airing of ideas, making of suggestions, so that when they're all published, the Order as a whole, and especially myself, can get some idea of people's thinking. I might feel for instance that people's thinking is very hazy in certain areas or wrong and that something needs to be done about that. So I'm going to have to work out how many sessions one felt was necessary and so on, in view of other activities going on at the same time. I think this will also help us to make the best and fullest use of our time.

Shall I read that list again? Then one can make any comment. Don't ask me to go into any details but whether you think it's something that shouldn't be discussed at all or something that you think is a particularly good idea to discuss and so on.

*Unity of the Order/Structure of the Order. Meditation in the Order or Movement, or cum movement. Then study. Ceremony. Right Livelihood. Communities. Art and Culture. Politics and World Affairs. Expansion of the movement cum teaching the Dharma. Training for ordination cum Kalyana Mitrata. Leadership in the Order cum responsibility. The Order and the Buddhist world. Sex and relationships cum celibacy. Communication in the Order.*

**Mangala:** Some of these topics have already or are in process of being discussed in the chairmen's meeting, so how do you see the two relating as it were? What might come out of this. Discussing Right Livelihood, there is going to be a conference on that. How would that relate to what's happening here, if it happens here?

**S:** I think there wouldn't necessarily be any direct relationship at all. Just another group of people. Just from the exchange of ideas amongst them, fresh ideas might come up that didn't come up in the other situations. It's not a bad idea that people should discuss the same point, the same ideas, in different groups with different people in fact. Though also we don't want to have too much overlapping and probably if there's a question of a choice, if we for instance couldn't have all these topics, supposing there wasn't time, well we'd probably cut or tend to cut or consider cutting those which were being discussed in some other venues.

Anyway if in the meantime anyone can think of any topic which you think should be discussed....

**Nagabodhi:** Quite a general one but I'll just say it without having thought it through. The relationship between the Order and the Movement. The WBO and the FWBO. [Pause]

**S:** Yes, I'll be writing off to Subhuti and he no doubt will give further thought and elaborate and then we'll send something to the chapters and maybe get some feedback from them.

Right. All right then now I'll come to the poem.

**End of discussion**