

Sara Carmel

President, ILC-Israel

Robert Butler was one of the founding pillars of gerontology and geriatrics. His scientific publications inspired many professionals in the world and in Israel. Two of the ideas and terms on which he left his mark are “ageism” and “life review” in old age. Both ideas have been widely accepted and investigated since the 1960s. I personally encouraged my research students to study these issues in Israel in order to promote our knowledge and understanding, as well as their applicability in interventions directed to improving the well-being of old Israelis. One of my Ph.D. students is currently testing the effects of a guided life review on terminally ill cancer patients’ well-being. A research group of Israeli scholars is working on ageism in Israel. The first collection of the workgroup’s papers will be published in Hebrew by the Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem in the coming year.

In addition to being a visionary, a physician and scientist, Robert Butler inspired us all by his dedicated activism towards improving the lot of elderly people over the world.

Professor Butler was also a great supporter of Israel and Israeli professionals in the field of aging. The world community of those who are dedicated to the aging cause will, therefore, be a poorer place after the loss of Robert Butler.

We, in ILC-Israel are grateful for having had the opportunity to know him in person and to work with him in order to enhance his and our ultimate goal – improving the lives of old people throughout the world.

It is a challenge to all of us in the ILC-Global Alliance to collaborate in continuing his vision, work and legacy.



Dr. Carmel and Dr. Butler

Alexandre Sidrenko

Senior Advisor, European Center for Social Welfare Policy and Research

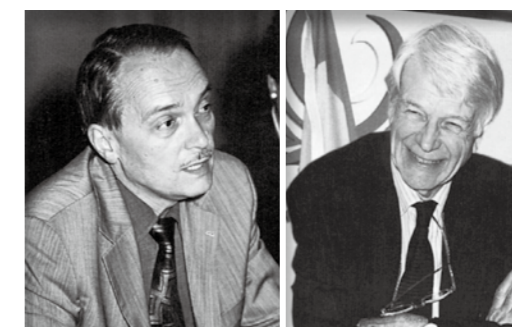
Dr. Butler was a thinker, a researcher, an advocate on behalf of older persons in his own country and worldwide, and an influential writer. His research shaped the modern thinking in gerontology, but most importantly prompted policy action on ageing. He coined the word “ageism” to describe and condemn discrimination against older persons. As a psychogerontologist, he introduced a concept of “life review” for depicting the phenomenon of older person’s immersing into old memories. And his most recent terminological innovation was the word “shortevity” that he was using to refer to the outrageous shortening of life in poor countries.

He was the author of several books that have framed and directed our understanding of population and individual ageing. His most recent book, “The Longevity Revolution”, was devoted

to one of the most profound societal transformation in the history of humanity that has been caused by demographic ageing.

Dr. Butler’s persistence and dedication were rewarded as he saw his ideas inspiring policy action. As a chair of the 1995 White House Conference on Ageing, he led the process of formulating the recommendations for policy responses to challenges of ageing in his country. My colleagues at the United Nations Programme on Ageing and I were proud to work with Dr Butler and his colleagues from ILC-USA during the preparations of the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002.

The legacy that Dr. Butler left to us will inspire the future generations of gerontologists and serve as the model of life of dedication and commitment.



Dr. Sidrenko and Dr. Butler
at the UN Second World Assembly on Aging, 2002