



Statement by
CONGRESSMAN JIM LEACH

before the
Subcommittee on Natural Resources, Agricultural Research
and Environment
Committee on Science and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives

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Empty-Chair Diplomacy in UNESCO

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you and your colleagues on the subcommittee this afternoon and want to commend you for your leadership in holding these hearings.

The U.S. decision to leave the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has enormous philosophical as well as practical implications for the foreign policy of the United States. It is therefore incumbent on Congress to review the Administration's decision carefully and present alternative perspectives, if warranted.

As a former delegate to the U.N. General Assembly, I have witnessed first-hand the corruption in rhetoric that plagues the U.N. system today. American representatives have a responsibility to stand up foursquarely not only for U.S. interests but for the principle of rational dialogue. But in diplomacy, as in sports, it does matter how you play the game, and I am apprehensive that joining too stridently in intemperate word games at the U.N. is not only immature but potentially counterproductive. More profoundly, deserting a principal U.N. agency appears at this time to be an unjustified response to an exaggerated problem.

Quitting is not the American way. Under the circumstances, it implies that we can't stand the heat in the crucible of North-South and East-West debate.

As its name implies, UNESCO deals principally with international education, scientific and cultural concerns. But our decision to abandon ship has extraordinary strategic implications. Indeed, it might well be argued that the Administration's ideological cut-and-run policy imperils U.S. security. After all, in the 20th century, no nation is an island. Security is collective rather than self-willed.

As Americans, we simply must come to grips with the reality that the United States does not now, nor will it ever again, claim as great a percentage of the world's economic and military might as it did at the end of World War II, when the United Nations system was established. Hence, in a very practical sense, our national security today requires that greater emphasis and sensitivity be applied to relations among States and to major international institutions such as the U.N. In a world which appears to have shifted, as Pope John Paul II recently warned, from a "post-war" to a "pre-war" mentality, responsible governments have an obligation to seek to strengthen rather than deprecate the U.N. and its affiliate organizations,

The Administration needs apparently to be reminded that the UNESCO withdrawal decision is being made at the precise time U.S.-Soviet tensions have returned to dangerous cold war levels and major bilateral arms control talks have been suspended. War rages in two parts of the Middle East, in Afghanistan, in Central America, and in vital areas of Africa. International terrorism is on the rise, placing the internal security of many nations in jeopardy. In addition, UNICEF tells us that some 40,000 children will perish daily from lack of adequate diet and sanitary drinking water. The scale of human suffering, particularly today in Africa, is staggering.

Given the fact that weapons of mass destruction have proliferated and that for the first time in world history civilization itself is jeopardized by man's war-making capacities, the leadership of restraint has emerged as the only rational philosophical imperative of state-to-state relations. Existing international institutions and procedures may be flawed, but the case for retreat from international dialogue is non-existent.

It is in this larger context that we need to examine the Administration's decision to withdraw from UNESCO.

The Constitution of UNESCO begins with these well-known words:

"The Governments of the States Parties to the Constitution on behalf of their peoples declare: That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed. . . ."

Since UNESCO's inception 37 years ago, the United States has played a major role in it and the majority of its programs.

As the Administration's recently released "U.S./UNESCO Policy Review" acknowledges: "UNESCO leads the international effort to eradicate illiteracy." UNESCO has done valuable work in education planning and training in developing countries, in collecting statistical data not easily available elsewhere, in coordinating educational efforts internationally, and in the education of the aged, disabled, and women.



In the science sector, the Administration report notes that "UNESCO has been an effective international forum for encouraging scientific debate and cooperation." UNESCO promotes research, broadens access to research data, organizes international scientific efforts on a cost-sharing basis, and offers scientific and technological help to developing countries. Major UNESCO science programs in which the U.S. has an interest include the International Brain Research Organization, the International Center for Theoretical Physics, the International Geological Correlation Program, and particularly the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, which provides marine data to the U.S. Navy and the U.S. scientific community. In addition, the Man in the Biosphere Program, one of UNESCO's most successful science projects, fosters an integrated approach to the world's ecosystems.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

In the cultural sector, the U.S. has long supported UNESCO's preservation and conservation activities, and major U.S. institutions, such as the Smithsonian Institution, USIA, the National Endowment for the Arts, and National Endowment for the Humanities, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the National Park Service, have participated in UNESCO-related projects. The cultural heritage program, as the Administration's report points out, is one of UNESCO's most impressive achievements. The U.S. was one of the major contributors to the preservation of the Abu Simbel monument in Egypt and has, itself, eight natural and four cultural sites on the World Heritage List.

Even in one of the more controversial sectors of UNESCO activities -- communications -- the Administration's report has a number of positive things to say. Because of UNESCO's activities in this area, the United States has had the opportunity to promote and defend U.S. values and methods in communications. The U.S. has not only not lost in any major debate but has been successful in our leadership efforts to create the International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC), thus giving impetus for Third World countries to focus on practical as contrasted with ideological communications problems. In addition, UNESCO with our support, assisted in the establishment of Africa's first community radio station in Kenya and was instrumental in giving guidance to the user-owned Caribbean News Agency. UNESCO also funds training fellowships in the U.S. as well as the procurement of U.S. communications equipment.

I take the time to point out the merit of these UNESCO programs because they have been obscured by the Administration's sweeping criticisms.

Everyone who is familiar with UNESCO is well aware of the problems plaguing that institution. They are serious. The Administration's statement of December 29, 1983, announcing the decision to withdraw, charged that UNESCO "extraneously politicizes virtually every subject it deals with," "has exhibited hostility toward the basic institutions of a free society, especially a free market and a free press," and "has demonstrated unrestrained budgetary expansion."

Congress has been fully cognizant of the problems in UNESCO as in many other U.N. - 3 - agencies and in the General Assembly itself. It is precisely because of this awareness and concern that Congress has, by law, authorized the Administration to take action if Israel is illegally expelled or in any other fashion denied her right to participate, or if UNESCO implements any policy or procedure which has the effect of licensing journalists or imposing censorship or restrictions on the free flow of information. In the case of the first scenario, involving Israel, Congress has authorized the U.S. to suspend its participation and withhold payment of its assessed contribution until any illegal action against Israel is reversed. In the case of the second scenario, in which actions might be taken against a free press, U.S. funding to UNESCO is to be suspended.

Because Congressional concern is so deep as to be reflected in statute it is instructive to examine where UNESCO stands on these two issues at present.

In the case of the Israeli question, Assistant Secretary of State Gregory Newell acknowledged at a hearing held by the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations on February 7, 1984, that the Israeli question was not a problem for the U.S. and that this particular concern was not a reason for the U.S. withdrawal. In a report to Congress in February 1983 (required under Section 108 of P.L. 97-241) the Administration stated that while there have been a number of unacceptable resolutions on Middle East questions, "the worst excesses have been avoided." It further said that efforts to deny Israel her right to participate, such as had taken place in the IAEA, "have not prospered in recent years in UNESCO." Why? Largely, the report explains, because of the "forceful presentation of U.S. Government views, skillful diplomatic intervention by the Director General, and help of moderates in the Group of 77." Clearly, on this major issue, the U.S. has forcefully presented its case and successfully carried the day.

I would like to add that not only has UNESCO moderated on the Israeli issue, but, according to a January article in the Manchester Guardian, "The Israeli Government, concerned about the threat to its own membership, made strenuous efforts to stop the United States leaving UNESCO." The Israeli concern, the article went on to say, "was raised in a confidential 'action memorandum' sent to the Secretary of State, Mr. George Shultz, on December 16, last year. . . ." Later the article says, in quoting the same memorandum, "The Israelis have expressed concern that with the United States absent, Israel would eventually be ejected from UNESCO." As one well-informed diplomat observed, the U.S. decision to withdraw places Israel in a particularly awkward position. Israel's enemies are always looking for ways to deny it participation in international organizations; consequently, Israeli policy is premised on efforts, often strenuous, to join and stay in as many as possible. But, if the U.S. decides at the end of the year to withdraw, and Israel finds itself forced by circumstances to follow, it will have a far more difficult time rejoining UNESCO in the future than will the U.S.

It is unclear to me how the United States can actively defend our own interests, let alone the right of Israel to participate in UNESCO, from an empty chair.

With respect to issues of a free press and freedom of communication, which is the second area in which Congress has taken a firm stand, the Administration reported to Congress just last week that "the Department of State concludes that UNESCO is not, at this time, actively implementing any policy or procedure proscribed by Section 109 of Public Law 97-241. None of the programs included in the Second Medium Term Plan (adopted in late 1982) or approved in the Program and Budget for 1984-85 poses any active, direct threat to a free press." Section 109 of PL 97-241, as my colleagues will recall, states that U.S. funds cannot be used for payments to UNESCO "if that organization implements any policy or procedure the effect of which is to license journalists or their publications, to censor or otherwise restrict the free flow of information within or among countries, or to impose mandatory codes of journalistic practice or ethics."

The Administration's February 1984 report continues by saying that marginal gains were made at the 20th UNESCO General Conference in the communications sector.

"On the ideological level, our view that any NWICO is 'an evolving, continuous process,' not an established, defined order, was accepted. Also accepted was our contention that any study of a 'right' to communicate must take into account traditional human rights (as opposed to collective, second generation rights). We successfully introduced new studies to the work program for 1984-85 concerning the 'watch-dog' role of the press, the role of the private media, censorship and self-censorship, and ways to strengthen freedom of information. We were also successful in eliminating projects calling for studies of the 'tasks' of the media, safety of journalists and grants to journalist organizations to study 'codes' of conduct, and implementation of the Mass Media Declaration."



In the Administration's "U.S./UNESCO Policy Review", the Administration also admitted that the recent 22nd UNESCO General Conference debate on this subject "gave evidence of a new and welcome degree of moderation." Although questions remain whether that moderation will increase or diminish, it doesn't take skilled guesswork to figure out that the hand of the Soviets and Third World radicals will be strengthened if the preeminent advocate of democratic values absents itself from future debate.

Dans-Bullen, executive secretary of the World Press Freedom Committee, which speaks for various free press organizations in the West, was also quoted in the New York Times on November 17, 1983, as saying, "If anyone is looking for an assault on the media at this conference serious enough to justify United States withdrawal, they won't find it."



We must keep in perspective that UNESCO did not invent censorship, nor the idea of a state-controlled press. Rather, it has become a forum for a debate on these practices. As such, we should not shy away from the opportunity the institution provides to argue for our values -- for a free press and freedom of expression. An activist human rights policy, one would think, would include active advocacy of the principles embedded in our Bill of Rights. The Administration is correct to object -- and object strenuously -- to efforts to sanction controls on a free press. But to retreat when proper advocacy is prevailing strikes many UNESCO observers as an ironic, if not counterproductive, strategy.

Free Press Foundation

It would also appear somewhat ironic for the U.S. to object too strenuously to the politicization of UNESCO while also advocating freedom of communication and freedom of expression. It would be contrary to Western traditions and democratic principles to imply that fair -- perhaps even unfair -- criticisms of the U.S. and the West should not be tolerated in international organizations. Our traditions as codified in the Bill of Rights are based upon the premise of Thomas Jefferson that in the free airing of views, truth would triumph over error. We have a right to be concerned, even enraged at times, over the excessive political rhetoric displayed within the U.N. system, particularly the trashing of the U.S., its allies and Israel by some of its more radical members. But our refusal to participate in UNESCO could well send a message that the U.S. is reluctant to rely on the outcome of the ongoing battle of words and that we are not confident our philosophical position will prevail. One might also conclude that the flip side of refusing to do battle with words is a potentially excessive reliance on military means to resolve international disputes.

We must all acknowledge that although the U.S. may be the target of considerable criticism that lacks justification there is an element to that kind of free expression of views that is quite healthy. To repeat a point made in a different context earlier, it is difficult to understand how we can more effectively protect our national interests in a free press and the free flow of information from an empty chair.

Likewise, the Administration also objects to other "statist" concepts debated at UNESCO such as the "New International Economic Order" and the "rights of peoples." The merits of our position aside, I fail to understand how the U.S. will defend the interests of its business community, promote the idea of a free market and stand up for its human rights principles if it absents itself from the very fora from which competing ideas are debated.

Finally, some comments on the budget issue are in order. Fiscal restraint is the watchword these days in Washington and around the world. However, it is curious to note that while the Administration is correct in charging UNESCO with program growth, the Administration's budget figures show an actual decline of some 13 percent in UNESCO's 1984-85 biennium as calculated in nominal dollars. UNESCO has done a better job in restraining its budget in the last two years than the Reagan Administration and Congress have done.

It is also important to note that the budget growth has not been as "unrestrained" as the Administration asserts. The original budget proposed by UNESCO called for an increase of some 10 percent in program growth but due to efforts by member states to bring that growth rate down, a "Nordic Compromise" was finally accepted by the General Conference which brought the growth rate down to the 3.8-5.5 percent range. It is precisely because of budget concerns expressed by the U.S. and other significant donors that UNESCO moderated its position. Again, it would appear we are cutting and running, despite substantial success in getting our way.

It should also be pointed out that UNESCO expenditures under that budget have significant spin-off benefits for the U.S. The Administration reported last year that "fellowships to Americans and foreign students studying in the United States, procurement of U.S. equipment, and consultant's fees and payments to American staff, amount to about 40 percent of the value of the U.S. contribution. Similarly, United States prominence in UNESCO's science and education sectors creates markets for U.S. scientific and educational products and materials."

Mr. Chairman, it is difficult to understand what caused the Administration to take so drastic an action as to serve notice of its intent to terminate membership in UNESCO. It is unclear what other alternatives -- short of total withdrawal -- were considered nor why they were rejected in favor of this radical option.

In the report to Congress last year required under Section 108 of PL 97-241, we were told by the Administration that "U.S. interests are generally well served by UNESCO programs, which are, for the most part, non-political and which can most effectively be pursued through international cooperation." The same Administration report also said "UNESCO is a major forum for U.S. multilateral diplomacy. As such, it provides the U.S. with an opportunity to promote U.S. (and Western) values and methods -- particularly in the Third World."

Why then has the Administration taken the decision it has to withdraw from UNESCO?

And, if the latest General Conference was as constructive as the Administration reported it to be, why has the U.S. concluded that UNESCO is more beyond hope this year than last?

It would appear that strong ideological and/or domestic political concerns intervened in a process of what would otherwise have been a rational, professional calculation of U.S. interests, benefits, and problems in UNESCO. The language of U.S. criticism to date has been exceedingly strong but surprisingly ill-defined. For the Administration to refuse to produce a detailed case is to acknowledge implicitly that there may be holes in that case. And for the Administration to refuse to submit a laundry list of changes it wants in UNESCO procedures is to imply ideological hard-headedness and a desire not to be serious about reform.

The decision to withdraw appears to represent as much an indictment of U.S. policy and performance within UNESCO as it represents an indictment of UNESCO itself. The greatest democracy in the world has been brought to its knees in this important international forum as much by irrational forces at home as those abroad. Political leadership in America has appealed to the lowest rather than the highest instincts of the body politic and in this case allowed nationalistic irrationality to prevail.

Not long ago, we might recall, the U.S. Representative to the U.N. suggested that perhaps we should consider moving the U.N. headquarters to Moscow for six months out of the year. Another U.S. Ambassador said he would gladly stand at the dock and wave goodbye to the U.N. delegates. New York Mayor Ed Koch jumped into the fray by calling the U.N. a "cesspool," and the Senate chimed in by adopting the so-called Kassebaum amendment, which called for major cuts in our contributions to the U.N. and four of its agencies, including UNESCO.

Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed and more extremist perspectives were avoided. The President himself went on record opposing the Kassebaum Amendment and told a gathering of U.N. delegates in New York that the U.S. was proud to be the home of the United Nations.

Now, as we face the impending withdrawal of the United States from UNESCO, it is my hope that cooler heads again will prevail and that the President will take a close look at what his subordinates have recommended. There is evidence a review process is under way, but it is unclear how seriously it will be conducted. In an unclassified memorandum from NSC Adviser Robert MacFarlane to the Secretary of State last December, MacFarlane states that the decision to withdraw was made with reluctance and that the "President wishes us to continue to spend every effort to bring about meaningful changes over the next year . . ." That memorandum also indicates the President's desire that U.S. representation to UNESCO be upgraded and that a panel of individuals from the academic, media and corporate world be appointed to advise the Administration on this matter. Finally, MacFarlane indicated White House willingness to review the decision if concrete changes materialize in UNESCO this year.

In a second unclassified memorandum dated February 11, 1984, MacFarlane stated that in order to carry out the President's wishes, "we will need to launch a major campaign to turn UNESCO around during 1984." He suggests that such a campaign might include an action plan, the mobilization of international support and more involvement in UNESCO personnel assignments.



In this context it would seem particularly appropriate for Congress to exercise a major oversight role this year. The minimal consultation which took place with Congress about the withdrawal decision reflects unilateral expansion of Executive prerogative. It belies serious efforts to craft bipartisan, bi-institutional approaches to foreign policy.

Accordingly, I have introduced legislation which would go beyond a simple requirement of consultation, to require the President to seek specific authorization from Congress should an Executive recommendation be made to terminate U.S. membership in UNESCO. The Constitution is silent on the subject of terminating international agreements of this nature. Since joining UNESCO in 1946 involved a partnership effort on the part of the Executive Branch and the Congress and an authorizing resolution passed by both Houses it would seem logical that the decision to terminate our membership would likewise be made on a partnership basis. As it stands now, the Congress has simply been presented a fait accompli.

Membership in international organizations of this nature should never be considered cast in permanent stone. But when termination of involvement in an organization of such stature is under consideration, it is incumbent on the Administration to bring its case to the Congress and the American public. A jointly made decision would certainly give any Administration a stronger position in its efforts to protect and advance American interests.

In this connection, Mr. Chairman, I want to commend you for calling for an investigation of allegations of mismanagement against UNESCO by our own General Accounting Office. There have been allegations of mismanagement, both with respect to finances as well as personnel. Congress should rightfully be concerned with these allegations and if there is merit to them we should work to rectify the situation. But let's be careful to keep petty abuses of power in perspective. Problems attendant with human foibles should be rooted out, but let's not allow concern for one director's management style mask an ideological pouting here at home. To refuse to stay and fight corruption from within is a denial of international responsibility. It may be a form of corruption itself.

Given the weakness of the Administration case as presented to date, I personally welcome Chairman Scheuer's initiative in seeking the involvement of an outside body to assist in evaluating UNESCO's budgetary problems. But whatever the result of an independent investigation of UNESCO's finances, it should be clear that few in Congress favor the disengagement of the United States from the entire United Nations system.

The American people are more deeply committed to the U.N. than many of its critics recognize. A CBS/New York Times poll, for instance, conducted in September 1983 revealed that 89 percent of the public favors the U.S. staying in the U.N. while only five percent favors withdrawal. In commenting on the results of the poll, CBS News noted that the Gallup Organization has asked about U.S. participation in the United Nations since 1951. It has consistently found the public supportive of U.S. participation. But never in its history of asking that question have as few as five percent favored getting out.

The American people seem to understand better than American politicians that isolationism has no place in the world today. If there is any hope of diminishing intolerance and hostility among nations it must come through a greater international commitment to education and mutual understanding which UNESCO symbolizes. Security in the 20th century may in the final measure relate as much to education and cultural advancement as the acquisition of increasingly costly and sophisticated arsenals of war. In a world in which weapons of mass destruction exist, arms control -- while a prerequisite -- is not enough. It is imperative to build up international organizations and advance international techniques of conflict resolution. Centuries ago American settlers could draw wagons around a campfire and provide protection against Indians, but today the only real protection against nuclear weapons is an advancement of human understanding.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you once again for the opportunity to share my views on this subject.

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H. R. 5082

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. LEACH of Iowa introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL



TO AMEND THE JOINT RESOLUTION RELATING TO UNITED STATES PARTICIPATION IN THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives
2 of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

3 That the joint resolution entitled "Joint Resolution
4 providing for membership and participation by the United
5 States in the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and
6 Cultural Organization, and for other purposes", approved
7 July 30, 1946 (22 U.S.C. 287m--287t), is amended by adding
8 at the end thereof the following:

9 "SEC. 9. The United States shall not terminate its
10 membership in, or otherwise suspend its participation in and
11 contributions to, the Organization, unless such action is
12 required by section 115 of the Department of State
13 Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1984 and 1985 (relating to
14 suspension of United States participation in the United
15 Nations if Israel is illegally expelled) or by section 109
16 of the Department of State Authorization Act, Fiscal Years
17 1982 and 1983 (relating to the imposition of restrictions by
18 the Organization on freedom of the press and the free flow
of information), or unless such action is specifically
authorized by law."