

### Appendix 13

#### Canadian Statement, Fifth Session of General Conference of UNESCO, June 14, 1950: The Selection of Central UNESCO Themes

... The basic programme as it is presents a reasonably cogent and logical whole. The fact remains, however, that many delegations in the plenary session have expressed the view that the UNESCO tree needs further pruning. The purpose of the Canadian draft resolution is to indicate a method by which this pruning may be accomplished.

The preamble of our resolution hardly requires any explanation as it is a recital of well-known facts. The last paragraph of the preamble, to the effect that a maximum concentration of resources is now indispensable, meets, I think, with general approval. In Canada, as I imagine in many other countries, there exists a feeling that UNESCO is grappling with too many problems to be really able to tackle one successfully. Let us beware of diffuseness for fear of compromising UNESCO's future.

The first article of our resolution asks the General Conference to defer until a more propitious time all low priority projects in the UNESCO programme, and to carry on those of secondary importance on a reduced scale. This is not a new proposal. The Director-General himself, in his speech of May 26 in plenary session, said "I had already (before the Fourth Conference) attempted, with the wise guidance of the Executive Board to correct the impossible situation created by the superabundance of projects, by laying down an order of priority".

Our clause would simply confirm and extend the practice followed by the Director-General and the Executive Board by providing them with the moral authority of a formal directive from the General Conference.

The Canadian resolution states further that the General Conference should decide to select a theme or themes. Theoretically, an appropriate central theme for UNESCO could consist of the following:

- (a) a broad objective;
- (b) one of the services of UNESCO;
- (c) a particular programme activity or project;
- (d) the grouping of programme items under a title which could be used effectively for publicity purposes.

In practice, however, only two kinds of activities could, in our opinion, appro-

priately be used as central themes: certain programme activities or UNESCO services.

The United States Delegation has suggested in plenary meeting that the activities of UNESCO be organized around a limited number of major objectives. The integration of the Organization's programme around a few major objectives may entail considerable adjustment in budgetary appropriations and in the administrative structure of the various departments of UNESCO. Moreover, the selection of a few major objectives for UNESCO raises very difficult problems.

These basic objectives would necessarily be couched in broad terms which would lack the concreteness and the urgency necessary to catch the imagination of the masses and obtain the public support that we seek. The public, as you know, does not indulge readily in esoteric exercises. It needs slogans which are both concrete and imaginative.

The proposal made by the United Kingdom Delegation that the various items of UNESCO's programme be grouped under one title, in order that the Information and Publication Service of UNESCO may be provided with a central publicity theme, has considerable merit and we heartily agree with it. As a matter of fact, our proposal provides for just that type of co-ordinated publicity, but as a corollary of the concentration of purpose in the programme activities. It seems to us that we should go beyond concentration of publicity efforts if we wish UNESCO's action to be really effective.

We should, therefore, use as central themes certain programme activities or UNESCO services. It would appear to be far easier to agree on a specific service of UNESCO or a certain programme activity, the furtherance of which would be the main concern of the Organization during a given period, than it would be to reach agreement on the major objectives of UNESCO for all time. In fact, it is conceivable that secondary themes may be combined with the central themes if this is considered useful. This essentially pragmatic approach would enable us to retain the flexibility of purpose which is so necessary in an organization such as UNESCO. If we wish to select a service of UNESCO for 1951, I suggest the Exchange of Persons Service which has elicited strong support from member states. If on the other hand we wish to select a programme activity as a central theme, I suggest a worldwide campaign against illiteracy in view of the favour with