



## STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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THE ROLE OF UNESCO

An address by Leonard W. Brockington, Chairman of the Canadian Delegation to the Ninth Session of the UNESCO General Conference, at New Delhi, India, November 10, 1956.

With a sense of honour and pleasure I speak to you in the name of the delegation from Canada. To my land throughout the years have come millions of men and women of many peoples. They came, seeking new horizons of hope and happiness for themselves and their children. Amongst our citizens are those who once came from almost every nation represented in this room. They and their sons and daughters, by their skills, their arts, their faith, their character and their honest labour, have added new strength and beauty to the fabric of our free Canadian citizenship whose privileges and duties they proudly share. If we Canadians can make a contribution to the work of UNESCO we do not forget what we owe to many peoples.

As brother-men, therefore, we salute all nations gathered in this place and as Canadians we pay tribute to those who are in very truth our Canadian motherlands.

It is also my pleasant duty to join our Canadian voices in the chorus of gratitude and admiration which hails the splendour of India's preparation for our welcome and our deliberations. We indeed rejoice to be amongst a people so gentle and so courteous. This I know - when the time comes for us to depart, we shall all cherish the hope that some day we may return. May I say also that it is a high privilege to see the workings of this laboratory of liberty and to witness in this great land a new freedom being forged and so valiant and, let us pray, so successful a determination to bring to every human life in this teeming sub-continent a new opportunity for fulfilment and enrichment and a better share of the fruits of the earth and the rewards of man's labour.

We also wish to thank the Director-General, the officers and counsellors of UNESCO for their dedicated labours - never forgetting those hundreds of men and women whose names are unknown to us. In distant and sometimes dangerous places they are

devoting their lives to hard tasks for the sake of mankind, with lasting honour to themselves and to the institution whose humble and steadfast servants they are.

We join too in the universal welcome to the membership of Tunisia and Morocco and speak our happiness that they have found their way to this Assembly along the highroad of freedom,

It is also our wish to clasp the hands of the delegation from Nigeria which has taken its place as an associate member. With what graceful and generous courtesy its Speaker announced their impending nationhood! Soon the Federation of Nigeria will become the partner of Canada in the brotherhood of the Commonwealth. May all our African brothers and Caribbean brothers also discover the truth spoken by the late Prime Minister of New Zealand when he said that membership in the Commonwealth is not Freedom with something taken away but Freedom with something added.

We have met under the shadow of violence and conflict and this delegation was deeply moved by the calm wisdom and sad sincerity of the speech of the Prime Minister of India at the beginning of this Conference. I think those who are present here today know the efforts which Canada and India have made, and will continue to make, to bring the world back to the sanity and sanctity of an honourable and just settlement in the Near East, and to ensure the substitution of the force of law for the law of force wherever violence rages. We hope that UNESCO will always be a household of free, friendly and fruitful discussion and debate and that above the thunders and clamours of the raucous world there will always be heard the voice of reason and what the poet calls "the still, sad music of humanity." Above all liberties, said one of the world's great voices, is the liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to conscience. Perhaps we can all take some comfort from the knowledge that even today no stronger criticism of the disputed policy of the British Government, no freer or more vigorous denunciation of its dangers has anywhere been spoken or written than in famous British newspapers freely published in Britain itself, in public meetings freely assembled in Britain, in earnest debates freely held in a free British Parliament and wherever men gather in Britain to hammer out the truth on the anvil of free discussion.

There at least we see in real and vital action some of the basic freedoms approved by the words of UNESCO.

Now this I believe is the most important meeting of any United Nations Organisation hitherto held in the East. There is amongst the Greeks an ancient verse recording this epitaph. "And if I am a Syrian, what wonder? We all dwell in one country, oh stranger, the world - and Chaos is the mother of us all." We in Canada who are the beneficiaries of the gifts of so many other peoples believe that there is only one race in the world which is really important and that is the human race. We are determined to pay with reverence our debt to humanity,

never to despair of human dignity and independence nor of the majestic ordinariness of the individual man and ever to give a value immeasurable and eternal to the humblest of human lives. We often recall the saying of the French philosopher, Renan, that the good Lord has written one sentence of his thought upon the cradle of every race. In spite of our personal shortcomings and the failings of each one of us in this room, do we not represent or at least try to represent all that is best in our lands and not what is worst? For it is my faith that nearly every great teacher since the world began, every supreme artist, every wise philosopher, every great religious thinker has had a passionate belief in that mysterious union of mankind, the mystic bond of human brotherhood. And so we have gathered here in this ancient wise land, so rich in art and philosophy. For too long we of the West have been blind to the beauty of the East, unmoved by its sorrows, deaf to its teaching. If this is a gathering of glad teachers and of glad learners, I believe that we of the West can take away with us in the gifts of Eastern wisdom and patience and tolerance and humanity more than we can bring. While we are all properly and passionately anxious to see standards of education and literacy rise through the world, let us always remember that, particularly amongst nations which have known the "drip of human tears upon the centuried years" there can be found amongst unlettered men and humble tillers of the soil and village philosophers and wayside teachers a wisdom and a humanity which are part of the folklore of mankind and are amongst the most precious of heritages to us all. For democracy itself, as an eloquent American has said, is really a method of accounting for everyone, through the little works of many hands, the little loves of many hearts, the little light of many minds.

Canada has been, since the first beginning of UNESCO, an enthusiastic and faithful supporter of its objects and ideals. While we have already heard many variations on these ancient themes, it is hoped that our delegates, consulting with those of other nations, will make a modest contribution to the approval of sound and useful programmes and the insistence on efficient administration and financial responsibility. It has been our view for some years that the resources of UNESCO have been scattered over too wide a range of activities. We all know what it is to long for the infinite and to be brought to face daily with the multiplication table. But since resources are not infinite it is our view that we should concentrate on practical projects of paramount necessity, deferring or eliminating others of a lower priority. We are particularly interested in the progress of education, in the exchange of persons, especially teachers and students, and in a world where it is often said that science darkens men's minds and hardens men's hearts, we will strive to help to turn its achievements to the needs and ways of peace, and to emphasize the spiritual and moral values of scientific research. We are particularly interested also, for reasons which I have tried to indicate, in the exchange of so-called cultural activities between the East and the West. We look forward to the day when Western students will in growing numbers study in Eastern universities. I often wish that there were more

Western scholars who had knowledge of Eastern literature and thought which compares with the amazing mastery and knowledge of the English tongue and of English and American literature which I find amongst so many of my Indian friends.

There is an Italian proverb, typically adapted by the English for their own use. This is the English adaptation. "Words are the daughters of earth and things are the sons of heaven." May I express the wish that this Conference is rich in the accomplishment of good things. I was born an optimist and in Canada we believe that pessimism is a form of cowardice and optimism is a kind of courage. Perhaps then I can express my hopeful faith that even the fires which rage around us today will prove to have been sacrificial fires and refining fires that will, before many months have passed, cleanse our mother earth. We can hear too the voice of wisdom which tells us that the heavens lie upon all lands and upon all peoples, that shadows only fall because and when the sun is shining, that it is always morning somewhere in the world. We have all set out on a long journey towards an ideal world. As we travel hopefully may I recall for your comfort, as I do for my own, words once written by Robert Louis Stevenson in his essay entitled "Eldorado" "Oh toiling hands of mortals, oh unwearied feet, travelling ye know not whither! Soon, soon, it seems to you, you will come forth upon a conspicuous hilltop and yet a little further against the setting sun descry the spires of Eldorado. Little do ye know your own blessedness! For to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour."

As I thank you for your patient listening and as we all travel hopefully together towards the golden city of our dreams, may I end with a personal memory. Many years ago when I was a young man I read in the London Times the account of the opening of a Salvation Army hostel in the east end of London by a Mohammedan prince of India. He said, "You may wonder how I, an Indian and a Mohammedan, am opening in the east end of London a Christian hostel. My friends," he said, "Truth is like a precious jewel; it has many facets." With that little gem of wisdom to the treasure-house of us all, the Canadian Delegation will give its whole-hearted efforts to the freedom of your deliberations and the wisdom of your conclusions.

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