

THE UNITED STATES AND UNESCO:  
Beginnings (1945) and New Beginnings (2005)

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The United States formally reentered UNESCO on September 29, 2003. First Lady Laura Bush raised the American flag; American soprano Susan Graham sang the national anthem. The United States won a seat on the UNESCO Executive Board. Louise V. Oliver was named Ambassador to UNESCO, and in June 2005 the 100 member U.S. National Commission for UNESCO met for the first time. In the meantime, several Americans were appointed to senior positions within the UNESCO secretariat.

Now, two years later, with administrative infrastructures in place, policy makers face the important work of leveraging UNESCO membership to attain the maximum political advantage to the United States and the maximum global good. In doing so, they may find it useful to look to UNESCO's beginnings, to the central role the United States played therein, and then to consider appropriate next steps in the light of current threats to peace and security.

**1945: A SENSE OF URGENCY**

The stakes were high when Archibald MacLeish met in Washington with the thirty-four members of the U.S. delegation to the London Conference that was to create a postwar educational and cultural organization.<sup>1</sup> Fifty-five million men, women and children had been killed in a devastating war that had ended only two months before. Fifteen million others had been slaughtered in the "war to end all wars" barely a generation earlier.<sup>2</sup> The Versailles Treaty and League of Nations had collapsed; the United Nations Charter was untested; the Soviet and Chinese threats were emerging and the atomic age had burst upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki with unimaginable force and psychic impact. These issues were clearly on MacLeish's mind when, in introducing his delegation that October morning to the issues they would address in London, he emphasized the crucial importance of the Conference's success "if the

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<sup>1</sup> MacLeish had been Librarian of Congress from 1939-1944 and subsequently an Assistant Secretary of State until shortly before the London Conference. A poet and dramatist, he won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1959. The delegation met the weekend of October 26-28, 1945. See Luther H. Evans, *The United States and UNESCO*, Oceana Publications, Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1971. p. 1. Evans, then Librarian of Congress, served as an adviser to the delegation. He published this account of U.S. delegation meetings based on the notes he took at the Washington meeting and in London November 3-15, 1945. He served as UNESCO Director General 1953-1958.

<sup>2</sup> <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstats.htm#Recurring>

civilization of our time is to be saved from annihilation."<sup>3</sup>  
At a press conference later the same day, he spoke of the vital necessity to have better understanding between peoples "in view of atomic fission" and, in a foreshadowing of his preamble to the UNESCO constitution said that the "eradication of distrust and suspicion are absolutely necessary to prevent world destruction."<sup>4</sup>

MacLeish's own sensitivity to the fragility of peace and human existence may have been heightened by a memorandum to the Department of State from the American Council on Education a month earlier."

"The Conference Group would...register its conviction that with the conquest of atomic energy, there had arisen a wholly new urgency in the furtherance of intellectual cooperation among the nations. If, as scientists believe, there is no military defense against robot warfare in the atomic age, the only safety for mankind lies in the direction of intelligence upon problems of peace, the development of appreciation for the cultural values and the intellectual and spiritual life of nations. The proposed Educational and Cultural Organization has, therefore, even deeper importance and larger responsibilities and opportunities than could have been anticipated earlier."<sup>5</sup>

The sense of urgency was shared. In London, MacLeish reported to his delegation that, at a luncheon he hosted

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<sup>3</sup> Evans, *op.cit.* Friday, October 26, 1945, a.m. meeting, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Friday, October 26, 2:30 p.m. meeting, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Reprinted in Evans, *op. cit.*, Appendix 2, p. 153.

November 5 for former French Premier and Conference delegate Leon Blum and Greek, Colombian and Mexican delegates, Blum had said "in the world at the end of World War I there had been for a few months a breath of hope, whereas now there was none, except for this Conference. He had emphasized the urgent necessity to guard the candle which this Conference represented."<sup>6</sup>

#### **THE CONFERENCE OF ALLIED MINISTERS OF EDUCATION**

The London Conference and, ultimately UNESCO itself, evolved from sessions of the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME). As early as 1941 the so-called London International Assembly had provided a forum for displaced representatives of like-minded nations to discuss common problems informally. R. A. Butler, President of the British Board of Education, who was greatly concerned with postwar reconstruction on the continent, formalized this gathering into the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education in November 1942.<sup>7</sup> Belgium, Czechoslovakia,

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Meeting of Wednesday, November 7, 1945, 9:00 a.m. p. 88.

<sup>7</sup> James P. Sewell, *UNESCO and World Politics*, Princeton University Press, 1975. pp. 34-36. The Sewell work and Gail Archibald's, *Les Etats-Unis et L'UNESCO 1944-1963*, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1993, utilize primary source documentation on the origins of UNESCO and the subsequent

France, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Yugoslavia and Britain were the first members. Membership gradually extended beyond Europe.<sup>8</sup>

Washington saw the elements of a future UNESCO in a resolution adopted in January 1943 that called for a "United Nations Bureau for Educational Reconstruction" whose purpose would be to meet urgent needs...in the enemy-occupied countries.<sup>9</sup> At the time, it was wrestling with the question of whether reconstruction of schools and protection of threatened cultural objects should be approached bilaterally or multilaterally and was not at ease with what it viewed as a premature tilt toward the multilateral approach.<sup>10</sup>

Washington's priority at the time was postwar security and the urgent creation of the United Nations as a multilateral security agency. President Roosevelt believed that to delay adoption of the UN Charter until peace was established ran the risk of nations perceiving international cooperation as less urgent and the United

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role of the United States. I draw on their scholarship heavily.

<sup>8</sup> The United States, the USSR and Luxembourg began participation formally in May 1943; South Africa, Australia, Canada, China, India and New Zealand in July.

<sup>9</sup> Records of CAME first and second meetings, cited in Sewell, *op.cit*, p.37.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p.41.

Nations creation as less certain.<sup>11</sup> CAME, consequently, was of considerably lower priority, and the United States maintained only an observer presence in the person of Richard A. Johnson a young, London-based diplomat.<sup>12</sup> In response to the Foreign Office's request, however, it sought full membership in 1944.

**WASHINGTON'S AWAKENING AND J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT**

Great power politics ultimately drew Washington into the CAME process. The Soviet Union, while skeptical of a UN educational organization, maintained observer presence and did not exclude closer engagement. China expressed a "preference for an enduring international arrangement." And France was working assiduously to counteract Anglo-Saxon influence and promote French language and culture by seeking to have the Paris-based *Institut International de Cooperation Intellectuelle (IICI)* approved as the new organization's secretariat. Washington grew uncomfortable also with what it considered overly aggressive British leadership in the creation of the new educational and

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation, The Founding of the United Nations*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 2003, p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> Johnson later served as "technical secretary" to the U.S. delegation to the London Conference. Evans, *op.cit.*, Appendix 1, p. 146.

cultural organization.<sup>13</sup> It was time for Washington to take CAME seriously; it did so with vigor.

In fact, the process had already begun. State Department officer and former Yale historian Ralph Turner had attended the October 1943 CAME meeting and subsequently urged full participation in CAME as a way of promoting democracy and political stability. He also made a coldly pragmatic argument: "we should enter...as quickly as possible if we are to affiliate with it at all, because the longer we stay out...the more difficult it will be to secure modifications in its organization or objectives."<sup>14</sup>

The State Department was not immediately responsive to Turner's appeal, but six months later in April 1944, with President Roosevelt's personal endorsement, it sent a delegation led by then Congressman J. William Fullbright that included Assistant Secretary of State MacLeish, Commissioner of Education John Studebaker, Stanford University Dean, Grayson Kefauver, Vassar College Dean Mildred Thompson and Ralph Turner with instructions to participate fully in CAME's efforts to sketch out a constitution for the new organization.

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<sup>13</sup> Sewell, *op.cit.*, p.63

<sup>14</sup> Archibald, *op.cit.* p.25-26; Sewell, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

The delegation had enormous influence on the shape of the future UNESCO. Elected Conference Chair, Fulbright immediately enlarged the CAME drafting committee, had it meet in open sessions and ruled that each country represented have one vote regardless of its size or number of representatives. He then seized the initiative by having his own delegation draft a parallel conference working paper. Kefauver, Studebaker and others worked until midnight over a weekend and, drawing on the existing United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) constitutions, produced a new document, "Suggestions for the Development of the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education into the United Nations Organization for Educational and Cultural Reconstruction."<sup>15</sup> Their text soon became the meeting's working text. After two open meetings with CAME participants, Fulbright chaired a small drafting committee that made minor revisions to the text. It was then sent as a CAME document to 44 governments for comment. Ralph Turner

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<sup>15</sup> Some months later, Washington, which ultimately did not favor multilateral strategies for delivery of rehabilitation aid, changed "Reconstruction" in the title to "Cooperation." Sewell, *op.cit.*, pp.64-65.

and Grayson Kefauver remained in London for follow-up consultations.

The political insights of the American delegation were significant in that they shifted the conceptual base of UNESCO from postwar reconstruction of schools and protection of physical cultural heritage to peace and security. Fulbright, for example, remarked that international efforts in education could "do more in the long run for peace than any number of trade treaties." And again: "Let there be understanding between the nations of each other and each other's problems, and the causes of quarrel disappear."<sup>16</sup> MacLeish, the poet, later articulated the new reality concisely. UNESCO's role would be "to construct the defenses of peace in the minds of men." It was to be a security agency; its weapon, intercultural dialogue.

Gail Archibald notes in her study that the success of the American delegation was due not to the enormous political, economic and military weight that it represented but to the energy and quality of its work. She observes tellingly, "The enthusiasm of the American delegates for their work came without doubt from the fact that they were

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 79-80

not professional diplomats."<sup>17</sup> That may or may not be the case. What is certain is that the Fulbright delegation underscored how effectively the national interest and the global good are served when the United States is represented by men and women of such high intelligence and courageous vision.

With war still waging, it would take months and a change of leadership at the Department of State -- Edward R. Stettinius Jr. replacing Cordell Hull as Secretary -- for the momentum toward the creation of UNESCO to be tapped.<sup>18</sup> Through late 1944 and early 1945 Washington's multilateral priority remained the creation of the United Nations. Moreover, the perceived failure of UNRRA to provide reconstruction aid efficiently led Congress, which was making dramatic cuts in all non-military expenditures, to question the new educational organization's potential effectiveness.

#### **THE MACLEISH DELEGATION**

On April 11, 1945, the very day CAME released its revision of the April 1944 draft constitution, Washington

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<sup>17</sup> Archibald, *op. cit.* P. 39.

<sup>18</sup> Stettinius played a central role at the 1945 San Francisco Conference and subsequently served as the first United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

unilaterally submitted a parallel revised draft to the British, French, Soviet and Chinese governments for comment. Both the CAME and the Washington texts foresaw the creation of a permanent United Nations Organization for Educational and Cultural Cooperation. After some discussion in London, they were edited into a common document that on August 1 was circulated as the working text of the November London Conference. It was this text that Archibald MacLeish and his delegation vetted paragraph by paragraph in Washington the weekend of October 26-28 and during the London conference.

Capable of grand vision, the MacLeish delegation was firmly grounded in reality. It is remarkable that during the turbulent first weeks of transition from war to peace, the State Department had reached out to civil society for the specialized advice, expertise and intellectual diversity needed. The delegation's composition demonstrated this. In addition to congressional representation and senior governmental figures such as Ralph Bunch, Archibald McLeish, William Benton, Luther Evans and a team of State Department in-house specialists, the delegation included professors and administrators from Harvard, Stanford, Hunter College, the University of Wisconsin, Vassar College and the North Carolina College

for Women as well as Waldo Gifford Leland, President of the American Council of Learned Societies, Alain Locke, a preeminent African-American intellectual, Frank Schlagle, Kansas City, Missouri, School Superintendent, George D. Stoddard, New York State Commissioner of Education and finally, in keeping with the times, Mark Starr, advocate of Esperanto as the universal second language.<sup>19</sup>

The delegation's views on the draft constitution were influenced by broad consultation with civil society, in particular the nine consultative meetings on the envisioned new Educational and Cultural Organization (ECO) arranged by the Department of State during September and early October 1945 in Denver, San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York and Washington. Representatives of magazines, radio and motion pictures, academic bodies, and citizens' committees of various political orientations had occasion to express their views.

Reports of the meetings leave no doubt that they did so thoughtfully as a selection of their queries demonstrates: "Will the National Commission in the United States be an instrument of federal interference or control? Should there be positive affirmation of freedom of thought, freedom of research and publication to be fostered by ECO?"

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<sup>19</sup> Evans, *op.cit.*, Appendix I, pp. 145-147.

Should ECO report on activities inimical to peace? Should there be a proviso against interference with essentially domestic activities? Should ECO have the power to expel members? Should ECO have explicit responsibility toward peoples in "Dependent Areas?" (The accepted euphemism for colonies) Should "neutrals" be allowed membership? What sanctions, if any should ECO use against countries with "bad" programs? Should ECO assume responsibility for promoting peace-making functions of the mass media? Is U.S. policy on these questions more important than ECO's? Will the UN break down film monopolies?"<sup>20</sup> These are some of the questions the Macleish delegation took with it to London. Some remain unanswered.

#### **THE LONDON CONFERENCE**

Like J. William Fulbright's delegation eighteen months earlier, MacLeish's was to make a lasting contribution to the future UNESCO. At its morning meeting November 3, the delegation agreed to recommend that "United Nations" should be part of the title, that "Scientific" be added... and that the full name which abbreviates as UNESCO be adopted."<sup>21</sup> Only days before, British Minister of Education Ellen Wilkinson had spoken publicly of the concern about

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<sup>20</sup> Evans, *op.cit.*, Appendix II, pp.209-213

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Meeting of Saturday, November 3, 1945, 10:30 a.m., p.48.

the future path of scientific research born of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. "In these days, when we are all wondering, perhaps apprehensively, what the scientists will do to us next, it is important that they should be linked closely with the humanities and should feel they have a responsibility to mankind for the result of their labours." The Conference agreed the following day to include science in UNESCO's mandate.<sup>22</sup> The United States then urged close collaboration with the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), a collaboration that continues to this day.<sup>23</sup>

At the same November 3 delegation meeting, American Council of Learned Societies President, Waldo Gifford Leland, was invited to redraft the preamble and the statement of the organization's purposes and functions. Two days later Leland, in Evans's words, "professed himself not satisfied with what he was doing -- he needed to write a poem, and he wasn't good at that."<sup>24</sup> As chairman of the drafting group for Commission I, charged with the constitution's Title, Preamble and Purposes and Functions, MacLeish quietly took on responsibility for the Preamble.

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<sup>22</sup> Sewell, *op.cit.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>23</sup> ICSU is now known as the International Council for Science.

<sup>24</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*, Meeting of Monday, November 5, 1945, 1:30 p.m., p. 71.

During the Washington meetings, 10 days earlier, it had been suggested informally that MacLeish "should write a new formulation [of the Preamble] in light of new ideas" but this apparently was superseded by the subsequent Leland assignment. During the same Washington discussion, New York State Commissioner of Education George Stoddard had said, "the preamble should be an inspirational statement, suitable for distribution to school children...like the Gettysburg Address." <sup>25</sup>

MacLeish did not disappoint. Evans's notes for November 9 state: "Mr. MacLeish presented the fifth draft of the Preamble... He had the agreement of the British French, Mexican and other delegates... When he had finished reading it aloud the general reaction was that it was magnificent."<sup>26</sup>

The Preamble's first phrase was inspired by British Prime Minister Clement Atlee's rhetorical query to the conference November 1 "Do not wars begin in the minds of men?" Atlee, himself, may have been responding to MacLeish's earlier observation to the conference "Until the choice to live together is the choice of the minds and hearts of men, the alternative of life will not truly have

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Meeting of October 26, 1945, 2:30 p.m., pp.15-16.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, Meeting of Friday, November 9, 1945, 5:30 p.m., p.115.

been chosen."<sup>27</sup> Whatever its antecedents, the poet within MacLeish seized upon Atlee's insight and forged it into the memorable "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

The conference organized itself into five working commissions: one, as noted earlier, to address the Name, Preamble and Purposes and Functions of the Organization, a second to address its general structure, a third to define the respective roles of the Executive Board and General Conference, a fourth to address the budget and to explore the organization's relationship to the United Nations and other specialized agencies. The fifth commission was to establish a Preparatory Commission to bridge the period from the end of the London conference until the first formal General Conference. The conference completed its work in sixteen days.<sup>28</sup>

Sir Alfred Zimmern, conference chair, had designated the United States for the chairmanship of Commission I and France for Commission II. At MacLeish's suggestion both

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<sup>27</sup> Sewell, *op.cit.*, p.80

<sup>28</sup> Given the length and expense of today's meetings of UNESCO's governing bodies, UNESCO officials might well examine the London Conference's working methods.

withdrew "allowing the smaller powers to have the chairmanship."<sup>29</sup>

The size and strength of the U.S. delegation enabled it to be represented by five or six members in each commission. Evans's notes demonstrate that delegation members participated constructively in each and had lively debates during the twice-daily delegation meetings about positions to be taken. Archibald notes that the U.S. delegation had a level of academic and scientific competence that most delegations lacked. "Except for the United States, academic specialists were a distinct minority, the majority of the delegations being made up of politicians and professional diplomats." As with the Fulbright delegation in April 1944, the American delegation made a significant and highly positive contribution to the conference and, despite its singular stature and competence, attempted to work quietly and maintain genuine openness to the views of others.<sup>30</sup> An Indian delegate noted that "U.S. delegates had shown flexibility in meeting the suggestions of delegates from other countries."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Evans, *op.cit.*, Meeting of Saturday, November 3, 1945, p. 52.

<sup>30</sup> Archibald, *op.cit.*, pp.74, 39.

<sup>31</sup> Evans, *op.cit.*, Meeting of Tuesday, November 13, 1945, 2:30 p.m., p. 136.

Initially at odds over the working text and other issues, French and American views on the new organization tended to converge after discussion. The French supported use of the American draft of the constitution as the conference's working document. Moreover, there was fundamental philosophical and political agreement that the new organization should be a forum where the peoples of the world, themselves, and not just their governments or the elite could interact. Thus, the high importance given by both countries to National Commissions for UNESCO as essential bridges between governments and civil society. More concretely, the Americans supported Paris as the site of UNESCO's headquarters albeit with the proviso that the General Conference "be ambulatory" and the understanding that the first Director General be English speaking.<sup>32</sup> For their part, the French abandoned the idea of having the Paris-based *Institut International de Cooperation Intellectuelle (IICI)* serve as the UNESCO secretariat and agreed to an international staff. They saw a kindred intellectual spirit in Archibald MacLeish and signaled

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<sup>32</sup> Support for Paris was not unanimous within the U.S. delegation. Vassar Dean Mildred Thompson "expressed the desire to have UNESCO in the United States even if the United Nations should go elsewhere, but she said she didn't want to press the point." Evans, *op.cit.* Meeting of Sunday, November 4, 1945, 9:15 a.m. p. 62. See also Sewell, *op. cit.*, p.104.

informally that they would welcome him as the first Director General. He declined, stating that he wished to continue to write poetry.<sup>33</sup> Archibald comments wryly that MacLeish's greatest attraction to the French may have been that he was not British. The British had *inter alia* raised many objections to Paris as the seat of UNESCO; they also objected to a UNESCO budget separate from that of the United Nations. Luther Evans's unguarded observation during the closing days of the Conference that a particular British delegate was "a member of the most incredibly unorganized and undisciplined delegation at the Conference" suggests that discomfort with the British extended beyond the French delegation.<sup>34</sup> MacLeish, himself, had an unpleasant experience with Sir Robert Wood while negotiating the highly sensitive issue of UNESCO's role, if

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<sup>33</sup> Sewell, *op. cit.*, p. 106; Archibald, *op. cit.* P. 67. Both Sewell, p. 105 and Richard T. Arndt in *The First Resort of Kings*, Potomac Books, Washington DC, 2005, tell the culturally rich story of senior U.S. delegation member William Benton asking the redoubtable Henri Bonnet if it were essential that the first Director General speak French. According to Arndt, "Bonnet's advice was memorable. How ridiculous! Of course it was not essential, not even crucial...merely *indispensable!* P.170.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* Meeting of Tuesday, November 13, 1945, 9:00 a.m., p 133. It is noteworthy that this was the only personal comment Evans allowed himself in 144 pages of printed notes.

any, in providing reconstruction aid.<sup>35</sup> And at the conference's eleventh hour, Theodora Bosanquet, the British delegate to Commission I, in an action that was particularly awkward for MacLeish as principal drafter, "began suggesting large amendments to the Preamble. It seemed they would try to get them taken up in the Conference Drafting Committee this morning. Mr. Leland said that if they did he would rule them out of order."<sup>36</sup> They did not.

**"THROWING THE LIGHT OF LEARNING ON IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS"**

While not entirely an exercise in *creatio ex nihilo* -- models of international intellectual cooperation such as the International Bureau of Education, the IICI and ICSU did exist -- the specific functions of the new educational, scientific and cultural for the most part needed to be invented. That nearly everything was on the table is clear from the back-and-forth of delegation meetings. MacLeish had stated during the Washington weekend that "he still

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, Meeting of Saturday, November 10, 1945, 5:15 p.m., p.123.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, Meeting of Tuesday, November 13, 1945, 9:00 a.m., p. 133.

didn't have a real picture of the action in which the new organization would engage..."<sup>37</sup> And in London:

"Mr. Kefauver remarked that perhaps it might be well to refer more specifically [in the constitution] to just what would be done by UNESCO in relation to important developments. Mr. MacLeish stated that the Organization would on its own throw the light of learning... He asked whether...UNESCO could issue recommendations to all nations of interest to all branches of knowledge."<sup>38</sup> There were many other voices: "Mr. Shapley said that there was a mighty immediate job to do in the travel of scientists in other countries which could be arranged on a large scale. Mr. Leland emphasized the need for intellectual freedom everywhere... Mr. Emmerich agreed that there was a need to restore communications. Is this to be an operating organization? He hoped that we would not set up a repressive organization. Funds tend to control. Implementing was an important function, to aid other organizations and associations to do their own work... Mr. Evans said, "Its purposes would be largely advisory." Underlying every suggestion was a studied effort "to bring light on recent developments to areas of the world which had been shut off from it."<sup>39</sup>

The U.S. delegation considered promotion of the free flow of ideas by word and image was an imperative for the new organization, and MacLeish's commitment to it appeared to have few limits. At a press conference on the afternoon of the delegation's first Washington meeting, he was asked about sharing information on atomic fission and was

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* Meeting of Saturday, October 27, 1945, 10:30 a.m., p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, Meeting of Saturday, November 3, 1945.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, Meeting of Friday, October 26, 1945, a.m., pp. 1-3.

remarkably forthcoming. "Mr. MacLeish indicated that the American delegation had not taken a position yet, but pointed out that it believed quite literally in the free flow of information as a basic principle. He supposed there might be limitation in time of war and shortly thereafter."<sup>40</sup> The question likely remained on MacLeish's mind for he raised it as the first item of business the following day.

Mr. MacLeish asked what our attitude should be in making information available on the atomic bomb. He felt that we should not retreat from the main principle of freedom of information, but we could say that we can't say about particular questions just how rapidly after the war the ice cap should be pushed back. The question was certain to come up in informal discussions, even if we should keep it off the floor. A discussion followed as to the difference between crating knowledge and controlling technical processes in creating weapons, industrial secrets, etc.<sup>41</sup>

MacLeish may have felt free to push the limits on this sensitive issue beyond anything imaginable today because of a post-Hiroshima directive from Dean Acheson that the "role of scientists, scientific collaboration and interchange of scientific knowledge should be emphasized and made explicit."<sup>42</sup> Given the secrecy of the Manhattan Project and the magnitude and impact of the scientific achievements

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Meeting of Friday, October 26, 1945, 2:30 p.m., p. 8

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, Meeting of Saturday, October 27, 1945, 10:30 a.m., p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> Sewell, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

behind it, it is not surprising that only two months after the initial explosion, a policy on sharing scientific data that was perceived worldwide as a potential threat to human existence was not yet in place.

### **PROGRAM PRIORITIES**

MacLeish returned often to the theme of using the new tools of mass communication, film, radio, telegraph, and the press, "to enlighten the peoples of the world in a spirit of truth, justice and mutual understanding." It was to be the first and most important program priority.<sup>43</sup> Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, William Benton, urged UNESCO to study how fundamental education could be provided by radio and films. Later, in the U.S. Senate, he would propose a "Marshall Plan for Ideas."<sup>44</sup>

The second program priority was to promote international cooperation in science, in particular by having the new organization establish close ties with the International Council of Scientific Unions to permit scientists from every country to exchange information and to work together. Again, the fundamental issue of free flow of ideas was at play as well as the veiled affirmation that a way needed to be found to use the breakthrough

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<sup>43</sup> Archibald, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>44</sup> Sewell, *op.cit.*, p. 97

scientific knowledge behind the destruction at Hiroshima to serve humanity.

The third program priority was to promote "Basic Education," with an emphasis on adult education through close cooperation with existing public and private programs. The goal was less to address illiteracy, as such, than to prepare the public for its responsibilities for active life in democratic societies and to arm it against ideologies that could lead to war. The American program proposals were adopted by acclamation.<sup>45</sup>

### **THREE PROBLEMS**

A number of delegates, with the Chinese, Greek, Yugoslav and Polish delegates the most outspoken, asked how UNESCO could construct the defenses of peace in the minds of men without first meeting basic human needs of food and shelter and the physical infrastructure of civilized life. They were in good philosophical company. Seven centuries earlier Saint Thomas Aquinas had stated that one could not be expected to consider even one's eternal salvation without first having a minimum of physical well-being. But Dean Acheson, unhappy with UNRRA's performance, firmly opposed UNESCO becoming a conduit for multilateral reconstruction aid. All such aid, he insisted, must be

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

bilateral, and he would agree only to the Preparatory Commission establishing a subcommittee to coordinate it through existing private charitable agencies. Acheson later acknowledged that some flexibility would have been in order.<sup>46</sup> In this regard, a senior member of the conference's staff observed: "The long-range enterprises of UNESCO were impossible...except as immediate needs in devastated and underprivileged areas of the world were met" and Sewell observed ominously that "To the extent these needs would remain unmet, the foundations of organized ineffectiveness had been laid at the outset."<sup>47</sup>

MacLeish attempted to reassure the delegates: UNESCO was, in its nascent "charter form," rather like a kite lying upon the ground. Action now was necessary to set it in motion.<sup>48</sup> But UNESCO as an organization was in large measure dependent for its success on the actions of others: governments and sister international organizations. Constructing the defenses of peace would require a worldwide, coordinated, and mutually dependent effort to address fundamental human needs as well as the aspirations of the human spirit. To succeed, UNESCO, other agencies,

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.82.

<sup>47</sup> Howard E. Wilson, "The Development of UNESCO," *International Conciliation*, 431 (May 1947), p. 298. Sewell, *op.cit.* p. 83.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

the international banks and governments would need to work in consort. If one partner in the enterprise should fail, the work of all would suffer, as regrettably has been the case periodically.

The status of "non-self-governing" or "dependent peoples" within UNESCO was another difficult issue for the American delegation. Several other delegations and a number of American non-governmental organizations including the American Council on Education (ACE) sought to have a resolution adopted whereby UNESCO would aid "dependent peoples" to develop their education systems while at the same time respecting their indigenous cultures. There was considerable support within the U.S. delegation. Alain Locke, in fact, had written a memorandum, based on discussions at the ACE, that went farther, proposing different scenarios of representation of "dependent peoples" at the General Conference.<sup>49</sup> Dean Acheson, fearful that the colonial powers could read the resolution as an incitement to the colonies to move toward independence, instructed MacLeish by telephone not to support the

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<sup>49</sup> Alain Locke, *Memorandum re Representation of the Interests of Populations in the Non-Self-Governing Areas in the International Organization for Educational and Cultural Relations*. (Presented at Conference in the State Department, September 24, 1945) reprinted in Evans, *op. cit.*, Appendix 2, pp.207-208.

resolution unless it was considerably weakened. Evans observed in his notes, "This seemed to Mr. MacLeish to mean that there wouldn't be any resolution. He hated to go home without doing something about education in dependent areas."<sup>50</sup>

The greatest disappointment to the United States, however, was the failure of the Soviet Union to participate in the conference. In response to an appeal from Assistant Secretary of State William Benton, U.S. Ambassador to Moscow Averell Harriman said that in the light of the Kremlin's having ignored the British letter of invitation and a second request of November 2, repeated approaches would only anger the Russians. Nonetheless, in a sign of the USSR's looming presence even "in absentia," conference delegates reserved one seat on the 15 member Preparatory Commission for the Soviet Union. Nine years would pass, however, before Moscow took its place at UNESCO.<sup>51</sup>

#### **"THE CHARTER IS GOOD"**

Formerly a partner in a major advertising agency and subsequently to be elected to the U.S. Senate, William Benton was the opposite of MacLeish in temperament and

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<sup>50</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*, Meeting of Monday, November 12, 1945, 9:00 a.m., p. 125

<sup>51</sup> Archibald, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

style. By force of personality and his position as Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, (the post MacLeish had held earlier), he wielded significant influence on public opinion. His judgment on the work of the conference, consequently, was important, and it was highly positive. "The Charter is good and it provides an excellent framework but UNESCO will amount to very little...unless it is backed by men and money. Perhaps, the more important of the two is the men. If the men who go in as leaders are up to the opportunity, they will see to it that the money is forthcoming." <sup>52</sup>

The passage of years has demonstrated that, while many of the leaders who went in were most certainly "up to the opportunity," a number within the UNESCO Secretariat and the Washington and Paris-based United States representation were not. The record is uneven in talent and commitment. But this is a story for another day.

#### ***FAST-FORWARD***

The details of U.S. participation in UNESCO from 1945 to 1984 are also the story for another day. This study permits only a fast-forward through UNESCO's success in saving the monuments of Abu Simble; its creation of important intergovernmental coordinating councils in the

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<sup>52</sup> Sewell, *op.cit.*, p.84.

sciences; its pioneer work in building educational systems in post-colonial Africa and Asia; the establishment of the International Institute for Educational Planning, the creation of the World Heritage Convention, the Convention Against the Illicit Import and Export of Cultural Property and the Convention Against Discrimination in Education; and the promotion worldwide of the principle that "a free, independent and pluralistic press is an essential element of economic development and democratic societies."

We need to fast-forward also through UNESCO's darker days: the New World Information and Communication Order, the anti-communist witch hunts of the McCarthy Committee, cold war politics within the UNESCO governing bodies and the secretariat, periodic poor administration and lack of program focus, and darkest of dark-days, the withdrawal from UNESCO in December 1984 of the country that thirty-nine years before had breathed into it its democratic values.

We fast-forward finally to September 12, 2002 when President Bush announced to the United Nations General Assembly that "As a symbol of our commitment to human dignity, the United States will return to UNESCO. This organization has been reformed and America will participate

fully in its mission to advance human rights, tolerance and learning."

***NEW BEGINNINGS - 2005 and Beyond***

The key to implementing President Bush's directive to participate fully in UNESCO's mission and the key to advancing the national interest at UNESCO is for policy makers to set strategic objectives over two, four and even six-year periods and then to decide tactically how to attain them. Doing so serves the national interest, it also obtains value for money: political and diplomatic capital for the 67 million dollars that the United States contributes annually to UNESCO. Otherwise, the United States risks remaining forever reactive to the initiatives of others, a policy of damage control from which it is difficult to be effective. Whatever one's views on the recently adopted Convention on Cultural Diversity, French and Canadian action over a five-year period to bring it to the General Conference for adoption is a brilliant case study in using UNESCO for strategic interests.

But how does one determine the U.S. national interest at UNESCO? In its most general form, one needs look no farther than Article 1, paragraph 1 of the UNESCO constitution, drafted during the London Conference by a

committee chaired by Archibald MacLeish. It states not only the purpose of UNESCO but, in its broadest formulation, the U.S. national interest:

...to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.

For specifics, policy planners need on the one hand to consider overall foreign policy priorities and on the other to engage the strength and diversity of American civil society to elaborate program priorities. In brief, they need to consult the present-day MacLeishs, the Grayson Kefauvers, the Waldo Gifford Lelands, the Luther Evans's, the Mildred Thompsons, the Alain Lockes and the Harriet Elliotts. Some such persons most certainly are already on the National Commission. The breadth and depth of the plenary statements by Edmund Pellegrino, Dana Gioia and James Billington during the National Commission meeting last June would have enlightened MacLeish's 1945 delegation. And it is certain that the United States would not have succeeded in being elected to the World Heritage Committee in October without the artful planning and effective diplomatic work of Commissioner Frank Hodsoll.

But some of the talent needed lies outside the Commission, and we must unleash the American academic and scientific and cultural communities and encourage them to interact with the U.S. government and with specialists within the UNESCO secretariat. Therein lies the greatest potential for effective U.S. engagement with UNESCO.

Big ideas are sure to come. In fact, the proposal at the June 2005 National Commission meeting by James Billington to establish an international UNESCO-coordinated digital library to promote transcultural dialogue is the kind of far-reaching objective that the U.S. needs to encourage and to work through the UNESCO system. This proposal could build on the existing UNESCO "Memory of the World" program and, with the support of the Library of Congress, could tap electronically into the great national cultural collections in the interest of greater understanding between nations and cultures.

UNESCO is currently engaged in the first steps of drafting its new strategic plan for 2008-2013. The time is ripe to shape it to serve the national interest; formally in responding to Secretariat requests for written input and informally by one-on-one conversations with the secretariat officers who will draft it.

. A possible long-term U.S. agenda at UNESCO, already submitted to the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO by the United Nations Foundation<sup>53</sup> might include efforts to:

- **Launch a Cultural/Intellectual Offensive Against Terrorism** by greatly strengthening and giving far more visibility to UNESCO's existing programs of intercultural dialogue. This could be done at modest additional cost and would help refocus UNESCO on its primary goal of "constructing the defenses of peace in the minds of men."
- **Utilize UNESCO as a major public diplomacy platform** to showcase the diversity and creativity of American society. Public diplomacy outreach at UNESCO could be one of reentry's major benefits. UNESCO provides a highly visible platform and a highly diverse audience for public diplomacy in fields -- education, science, culture and communications -- where the United States excels. Effective outreach could project the true face of America, showcase our vast expertise in UNESCO's areas of competence and contribute to the cultural offensive against terrorism. The U.S. has rarely utilized UNESCO's splendid exhibition halls for artistic displays or its large auditorium for cultural events. An event along the lines of "100 years of American cultural diversity in music, dance and song" could tell the story of American cultural diversity.
- **Build on the success of the World Heritage Program to strengthen heritage protection and enhance UNESCO's visibility and private sector funding.** UNESCO is unchallenged as the international coordinator for the protection of natural and cultural sites of outstanding universal value. Yet, despite its flagship status the program is seriously underfunded and understaffed and does not enjoy the support within UNESCO that it merits. The World Heritage Center

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<sup>53</sup> See "UNESCO Medium Term Strategy 2008-2013," Memorandum from United Nations Foundation Senior Vice President for Programs Melinda L. Kimble to Marguerite Sullivan, Executive Director, U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, September 28, 2005.

could also be utilized as an in-house laboratory for innovative financing and management efforts.

- **Prepare a successor generation attuned to global issues.** Support the highly successful UNESCO Associated Schools Program that links 7000 schools around the world. Reestablish and finance it within the United States. Utilize its "World Heritage in Young Hands" program as a key activity. Finance Fulbright fellows to spend a year or more at UNESCO.
- **Employ UNESCO's strengths as convener, as provider of access to governments, and as coordinator of global infrastructures to serve other U.S. programmatic goals.**
- **Make UNESCO a Management Paradigm for effective UN Agencies.** Engage Director General Matsuura to utilize his remaining four years to leave a legacy of "Excellence in UN Agency management for the 21st Century." He can likely be persuaded to seek a legacy beyond his current "intangible heritage" identification. Matsuura has the backbone to make difficult decisions. The two biennial budgets that remain for him to construct could be the medium for moving UNESCO towards new ways of staffing, programming and financing.
- **Governance Reform.** \$13.5 million are budgeted for the governing bodies for 2006-2007. This does not count the cost of senior staff being immobilized at these meetings for 15-20 weeks per biennium or the cost in staff time of preparation and translation into 5 languages of scores of working papers. All efforts to reform governance in any significant way have failed because of differences and vested interests among the Member States. Matsuura cannot effect these reforms alone. But he is untouchable during his final term, and he could use his next budget to reduce this sum, say he is devoting the savings to Education for All and urge the Executive Board and General Conference to live within the new ceiling. It will take courage, Member States will fight it, but it is a necessary step.

- **Results-Based Management.** The Executive Board has given the Director General a mandate to implement RBM house-wide. But funding is limited and progress is unacceptably slow. RBM needs to be put on the fast track. Canada would be a useful partner.
- **Explore Innovative Financing and Institutional Outreach.** Highly popular programs such as World Heritage should be utilized more effectively to improve UNESCO's visibility and funding sources.

It is time for a new beginning at UNESCO. The controversy over the Cultural Diversity Convention needs to be put behind us and the proper lessons learned from it.<sup>54</sup> There is a much bigger issue before us; a clash of ideas and values that constitutes a threat to peace and security. The threat is cultural in nature and UNESCO is a principal front on which to address it. MacLeish and his delegation can help -- by example. In London, they made every effort to distract delegates from the enormous economic and military power they represented

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<sup>54</sup> Washington found itself isolated -- or possibly isolated itself -- from its traditional allies by calling for approximately thirty public votes at the October 2005 General Conference. Except for the vote against the Program and Budget for 2006-2007, the votes addressed the Convention on Cultural Diversity. This puzzled many delegates since two would have sufficed to record firm U.S. opposition to the convention. It is noteworthy that Ambassador Oliver, herself, was not isolated; her tact, knowledge, and diplomatic skills are widely respected. When the EU representative publicly praised them at a tense moment of the debate on cultural diversity, she received warm and extended applause from the crowded assembly hall. The applause was repeated the following morning during a meeting of the General Conference's Bureau.

and asked them rather to give attention to the force of their ideas and the collegiality and quality of their work. It was a successful formula. We have the intellectual resources to generate ideas as strong and work as admirable. We have the ability to prevail in any clash of ideas. But like MacLeish and his team, we will have to work at it very hard. And like them, we will have to understand and respect and then employ the multi-dimensional subtleties of multilateral diplomacy. The stakes are high. The challenge is ours.

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