

UNESCO cuts staff and programs because of US withdrawal

The withdrawal of the United States from UNESCO at the end of 1984 was widely expected to seriously impair participation by US scientists in global scientific programs unless funds that previously went to UNESCO were reprogrammed to support various international programs directly.

One and a half years after the US withdrawal, it is perhaps too soon to assess all the consequences. It appears that the consequences for UNESCO as an organization and for the programs it supports have been quite severe, but the ability of US physicists and geophysicists to participate in those programs appears to be largely unimpaired. That seems to be the case even though the US government has largely reneged on its promises to reprogram its UNESCO science contribution.

The loss of the \$47 million annual contribution from the United States has translated into a 25% reduction in the UNESCO budget, Abdul Razza Kaddoura explained in an interview conducted at his Paris office in late June. Kaddoura, assistant director general of UNESCO for the sciences, said that as a result of the budget cut the organization has had to cut one-third of its managerial staff in the last two years.

It has been possible to reduce UNESCO personnel without firing people, by taking advantage of normal attrition. The cuts have been fairly random, Kaddoura said, and no particular program areas have been especially affected. "We have taken the attrition where we found it."

Cuts have affected the ocean-sciences and the Man and the Biosphere programs quite severely, though Kaddoura notes that Britain fought hard for certain marine projects—"to good effect"—even after announcing its withdrawal last year.

Asked whether he thought UNESCO or the United States has been hurt worse by the US withdrawal, Kaddoura said that "it is to the disadvantage of everybody concerned." Already, he observed, it is proving more difficult for UNESCO to work with US institutions, especially those that are government connected such as the Geologic Survey

and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Kaddoura argued that scientists in many countries are affiliated with their governments and find the framework of an international organization such as UNESCO helpful. Scientists from such countries "feel more secure" in this framework, he claimed, and the US withdrawal is "to the prejudice of their interests because they often can have additional contact with US scientists in UNESCO programs."

Kaddoura, a native of Syria and a physicist who earned his PhD under C. F. Powell at the University of Bristol, was especially concerned about the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, which is funded by UNESCO, the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna and—increasingly—the Italian government. The United Kingdom has channeled directly to ICTP a contribution that would have gone through UNESCO. The United States plans to make a much reduced contribution of \$10 000 to ICTP through The American Physical Society in fiscal 1986, and similar funding has been requested for the 1987 budget.

The US budget request for the 1986 fiscal year contained \$2.75 million for UNESCO-related programs, and Congress ended up cutting the appropriation to \$1.2 million. Of the \$47 million that the United States had contributed yearly to UNESCO, roughly \$14 million went to support international science programs.

Despite complaints from US scientists about the government's broken promise to reprogram more UNESCO money, the 1987 foreign-aid bill once again is expected to contain little more than \$1 million for the UNESCO substitute fund. Programs supported by this fund include the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the International Geological Correlation Program, the Natural Hazards Program, the International Hydrological Program, Man and the Biosphere, Science Documentation and nongovernmental scientific organizations such as the International Council of Scientific Unions and ICTP.

The United States continues to be a member and to be represented in the governance of the IOC and, via the International Union of Geological Sciences, participates in the management of IGCP. But it has lost its formal representation on the boards running Man and the Biosphere and the International Hydrological Program, according to Marti Treichel, who is with the office of international affairs of the National Research Council-National Academy of Sciences.

US officials with responsibilities for UNESCO-related matters say that the US contributions to several of the international programs remain as big as any other country's (a claim that others deny), and while some at UNESCO argue that the United States should contribute 25% of each program's budget because it contributed 25% of UNESCO's budget, the US government does not accept that reasoning. "Voluntary contributions are voluntary contributions," says one US official.

While these officials realize that US scientists generally would be happier if there were more money for international programs, the appropriate office—the office of social and refugee affairs—has not been getting many specific complaints. If there are such complaints, they say, the office would be glad to consider them.

The US science communities have reacted with "sporadic and unfocused concern" to the US withdrawal from UNESCO, Philip W. Hemily concludes in a paper prepared for the 1986 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Hemily, a physical chemist, is a former NSF official and Foreign Service officer who served as a consultant to the National Academy in 1984 when it examined the prospective consequences of the US withdrawal.

As Hemily sees it, the problems with UNESCO began in the 1960s with the accession of large numbers of developing countries, which led to a conflict between attention to Third World problems and UNESCO's original mission, the advancement of knowledge. Increasingly, the swelling UNESCO staff devoted

its energies to the review of what Hemily considers small and "marginal" projects for developing countries. In evaluating and fostering such projects, a pattern of bureaucratic unilateralism developed, with little or no outside review from peer scientists.

The situation was not helped any, Hemily feels, by the attitude of "benign neglect" that US administrations tended to adopt toward international organizations in the 1970s. Instead of assigning its strongest diplomats to UNESCO, Hemily maintains, the United States permitted problems to fester uncorrected.

Hemily also places some blame on the US press, which he feels overreacted to proposals in UNESCO for a "new international information order." He thinks that even after such proposals failed the US press tended to neglect the valuable things UNESCO does.

The scientific side of UNESCO never got very politicized, Hemily asserts, and "if science were an independent unit in UNESCO, we'd still be in it, although the UNESCO bureaucracy would still require corrective action."

Prospects for UNESCO would be considered better in the United States if Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, the controversial and allegedly autocratic director of the agency, were replaced next year. Rumors circulating in Europe have it that M'Bow may not run again.

But the developing countries have rallied to M'Bow's support, and the Soviet Union may not wish to alienate them, even though it was reported last year that the Soviet government would prefer to see M'Bow replaced in 1987. In Kaddoura's estimation, member states in UNESCO would like to have the United States back in the organization, even though the US absence gives some of them an advantage in just those political bodies that have caused such irritation to US sensibilities.

If Kaddoura is right, these countries will not press their political advantage too hard. M'Bow, for his part, appears scrupulously to have avoided any appearance during the past two years that he is taking reprisals against US scientists. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, however, he did fire the top-ranking US citizen in UNESCO as well as the Yugoslavian assistant director general, who "had dared to criticize the group's anti-West propaganda and corrupt bureaucracy and to suggest that a fire destroying financial records a couple of years ago was no accident" (see PHYSICS TODAY, February 1985, page 54).

A high State Department official with the bureau for international organizations believes that M'Bow is "pretty well assured reelection in 1987." While the executive board of UNESCO will take nominations this Oc-

tober, the official does not anticipate that M'Bow will face any real competition.

Asked about the staff and program cuts at UNESCO, the same official said that the US government is "aware of the cuts" and "aware of the current leadership situation." He said that the government "would like UNESCO to get its house in order, to become a much more effective organization than it was when we left it, but the situation looks pretty bleak."

The prospect of falling dominoes seemed to loom last year when the US withdrawal was followed in quick succession by the withdrawals of the UK and Singapore. *The Wall Street Journal* claimed in an editorial in May that Japan, West Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Denmark will leave UNESCO next year if M'Bow is reelected.

Contrary to that claim, a general bolt of Western states appears increasingly unlikely. Member states did much to try to retain the UK and Singapore in

the organization. This was particularly clear, Kaddoura points out, during the November 1985 session of the general conference. In the UK, the select committee of the House of Commons advised against withdrawal, but the final decision went counter to that advice.

Other countries continue to criticize some of UNESCO's programs, Kaddoura told us, but it is unlikely that there will be more withdrawals. Officials at the German and Japanese embassies in Washington say it is not true that their countries will withdraw in the event of M'Bow's reelection and assert that they will remain in UNESCO and work for far-reaching reforms.

Jacques Laureau, a French foreign-office official responsible for cooperation in science and technology, shrugged when asked about the outlook for UNESCO and the United States. "The United States will have to go back sooner or later," he said. "How can it stay out?"

—WILLIAM SWEET

ASA elects McKinney and Medwin

Chester M. McKinney is the president-elect of the Acoustical Society of America, and Herman Medwin is vice-president-elect. McKinney will succeed Ira Dyer as president in 1987, and Medwin will succeed W. Dixon Ward as vice-president.

McKinney received a PhD in physics from the University of Texas in Austin in 1950, after serving as a radar officer in the US Army Air Force from 1942 to 1946. He taught physics at Texas Technical University in Lubbock from 1950 to 1953 and has held a series of positions at the University of Texas in Austin since 1953. He was director of the Applied Research Laboratories at the University of Texas from 1965 to 1980.

Since about 1950 McKinney has worked largely on underwater acoustics and sonar engineering. His specialty is high-resolution sonar related to submarine and mine detection as well as ocean-floor mapping, navigation and fish finding. Much of his time also has gone into administration of acoustics research.

Dyer earned his PhD in acoustics at MIT in 1954. He worked as an acoustical scientist with Bolt, Beranek & Newman Inc from 1951 to 1961 and was vice-president and director of physical sciences for the firm from 1961 to 1971. He also served as director of the advanced-study program from 1964 to 1967. From 1971 to 1981 he was department head and professor of ocean engineering at MIT, and he continues to be a professor in that

department.

Dyer's main research interests for the last decade have been Arctic ocean acoustics and Arctic science. He specializes in the behavior of Arctic ice and its fracture mechanisms, which give rise to noise radiated into the ocean. Observation of the noise provides clues to the mechanisms and and also provides practical data for designers and users of sonar systems.

Medwin earned his PhD in physics from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1954. He worked for Bolt, Beranek & Newman Inc from 1954 to 1955. He then accepted a faculty appointment at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, where

McKINNEY

