

Pressures grow on Reagan to block Unesco's world information order

THE TIMES

From Nicholas Ashford, Washington, July 19

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At the end of last week the House subcommittees on international organizations and on human rights endorsed a resolution calling on Unesco to "cease efforts to attempt to regulate the flow of news and information around the world".

The resolution, which will now be presented before the House foreign affairs committee, refers to the attempts by Third World and socialist countries to promote a "new world information order" through Unesco.

Western nations, especially the United States and Britain, have been alarmed by what they regard as an attempt to control the free flow of information around the world. The House resolution, although mildly worded, reflects the pressures which are building up on the United States for the Reagan Administration to take an even tougher line than at present in fending off what Mr Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, described as an ideological assault on "our fundamental First Amendment interests".

During the hearings a series of congressional and senior media representatives testified that the United States should oppose all attempts by Unesco to impose restrictions on the press. Measures currently being considered by Unesco call for the regulation and licensing of journalists.

Senator Dan Quayle, who has sponsored a similar resolution in the Senate, said freedom of the press was a non-negotiable issue. The new world information order was nothing but a codeword for increased state intervention in the gathering and dissemination of news.

"We must demand a free press. We cannot barter it away," said Representative Millicent Fenwick, one of the co-sponsors of the House resolution. The other co-sponsor, Mr Ribert Shamansky, added: "If we don't stand up for this, then we don't stand up for anything." The Unesco plan was "in support of tyranny and thought control".

Virtually the only witness to argue in favour of a more sympathetic approach towards Third World attempts to get

more positive coverage in the Western press was Professor Hamid Mowlana, from the American University in Washington. He compared attempts to introduce a new world information order with the crusade by the Associated Press news agency 65 years ago to break the domination of news dissemination which was then in the hands of the London-based Reuters news agency and Havas of France.

Professor Mowlana said Western countries were being given a distorted picture of Unesco and that the debate had been simplified into "United States" (the West), "them" (the Soviet Union and socialist block) and "those" in the Third World.

Several members of Congress suggested during the hearings that the United States should withdraw from Unesco if the plan for a new world information order is approved. However, Mr Abrams said the United States would not "abandon the field to our adversaries".

The Capital Report

Panels Condemn U.N. News Plan

Joint Session Vote Supports U.S. Role in Press Freedom

By Kenneth R. Walker
Washington Star Staff Writer

Two subcommittees of the House Foreign Affairs Committee yesterday approved a resolution condemning attempts by a U.N. agency to regulate the work of journalists.

By a 7-1 vote, members of the two panels, meeting jointly, passed a resolution condemning the move by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The vote was taken following two days of hearings during which leaders of the Congress, U.S. media and the Reagan administration strongly criticized UNESCO proposals.

Rep. Don Bonker, D-Wash., chairman of the subcommittees, said the full House Foreign Affairs Committee would consider whether "to put some teeth" in the resolution.

Bonker made his comments in response to remarks made by Rep. Dante B. Fascell, D-Fla., who urged that the resolution contain some congressional threat of withdrawing either funding or participation in UNESCO if the regulations for the media are put into effect.

Leonard Marks, secretary-treasurer of the World Press Freedom Committee and former director of the U.S. Information Agency, urged that a task force be established to monitor UNESCO's activities to determine the extent to which this "impinges on democratic values."

Marks, who was chairman of a meeting of private press organizations from 21 countries at Talloires, France, at which a declaration of free press principles was adopted, recommended that the task force undertake two areas of study:

- "The extent to which UNESCO involvement in education and communication impinges on our democratic values, and a study of whether UNESCO has promoted the ideology of the Soviet bloc countries.

- "The extent to which the United States has an influence in determining UNESCO policy through appointments to staff positions."

Fascell said he favored an approach recommended by Murray J. Gart, editor of The Washington Star, who urged the committee to "ensure that the U.S. cannot and will not engage in any compromise of free press principles."

Gart said he favored a Senate-approved resolution calling for the United States to withhold its share of the funding for projects it believes violate the principles of a free press.

"The amendment adopted by the Senate charts a line that seems sufficiently precise to alert UNESCO to areas it should avoid - but also sufficiently open-ended to support a U.S. response in any number of actions that may be taken," he said.

"As you know, the Senate amendment calls for withholding 25 percent (the U.S. share) of the amount spent on activities whose effect 'is to license journalists or their publications, to censor or otherwise restrict the free flow of information within or between countries, or to impose mandatory codes of journalistic practice or ethics.' That may be all the legislative injunction required at this time. But the U.S. policy should include the option to go much further," he said.

"We should be clear that we won't finance a bureaucracy that will be used against our own press," Gart told the subcommittees. "The U.S. should stand and fight."

Arch L. Madsen, president of Bonneville International Corp., said that members of the committee had indicated avid support of the Talloires Declaration. "It would be very helpful," he added, "if this support is made official and widely communicated to the public - as a witness to all the world."

The Washington Star (like the Washington Post and the New York Times) completely ignored the testimony of Hamid Mowlana, the only witness to argue in favor of a more sympathetic approach towards the Third World, the UNESCO, and the New World Information Order.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION LEGISLATION

**Another Turn of the Screw and
Never Mind the Facts**

Whatever the aim of Third World calls for a "new world information order," much of the U.S. Congress—urged on by U.S. news media and the Department of State—has decided a threat to press freedom is involved that may enable modest economies.

The economies would come from reducing or ending U.S. support to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). A new legislative proposal, the joint initiative of Senators Moynihan and Quayle, favors reductions equalling 25 percent of the amount UNESCO spends on "projects or organizational entities the effect of which is to license journalists or their publications, to censor or otherwise

restrict the free flow of information within or between countries, or to impose mandatory codes of journalistic practices or ethics." A more sweeping measure designed to end U.S. UNESCO financing has been prepared by Tennessee Congressman Robin Beard for introduction when the State Department 1982-83 authorization bill reaches the House floor.

Related developments in the House include preparation of a resolution patterned in part after the Moynihan-Quayle proposal. Its language derives as well from two earlier House resolutions—137 and 142—responding to news reports that in May became the source of erroneous impressions of an exchange between UNESCO Director-General Amadou Mahtar M'Bow and Western journalists at an international conference for "independent news media" in Talloires, France. M'Bow told the conference he was compelled to carry out the programs mandated by the 1980 UNESCO General Conference in Belgrade. Press accounts reported him as saying UNESCO would continue efforts to license journalists and regulate news media.

Immediately thereafter, the authors of House Resolution 142, New Jersey's Millicent Fenwick and Ohio's Robert Shamansky, enlisted some 50 co-sponsors with a letter that said UNESCO plans "would include a commission to license journalists and ensure that they comply with the 'generally accepted' ethics of their profession." But from a transcript of M'Bow's remarks produced by the Talloires meeting's sponsor, Tufts University's Edward R. Murrow Center, it is clear that M'Bow stated: "Nowhere has UNESCO said that licensing is required for journalists in order to carry out their professions. Please show me where UNESCO has included this in its program. That does not exist."

These and other discrepancies were never seriously explored during two days of joint hearings, July 9 and 16, by two subcommittees of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, even though their purpose was to weigh the resolutions while considering possible sanctions against UNESCO. The best of several opportunities to correct the record was foreclosed when Chairman Don Bonker of Washington nullified in unorthodox and arbitrary fashion the testimony of probably the most knowledgeable witness among the dozen invited to appear.

At mid-point on the second day, with a quorum present for the first time, Bonker halted proceedings and called for a voice vote, the result of which was endorsement of the resolutions. Favorable action by the full committee was recommended, assuming the addition of language that would spell out penalties if UNESCO failed to heed the admonition in H.R. 142 to cease attempts to regulate news content and interfere with the world press.

Still to be heard from when Bonker acted was Hamid Mowlana, director of international communication studies at American University in Washington, D.C. and a former journalist engaged in teaching and research on international communications for the past 15 years.

Eventually, in an abbreviated version of his prepared statement, Mowlana was able to express his belief that a principal issue of the hearing was "whether in fact the evidence bears out the premise that UNESCO has taken any decision or has any intention to license journalists or to regulate the press."

"I have gone through many documents," he said, "and there is no decision of the General Conference nor any proposed program activity during the 1981-83 period that would indicate such action. . . I do not want to defend all the positions taken by UNESCO. But let me note that it is my impression that an incomplete, if not a distorted, image of UNESCO has been given to the public."

None of the subcommittee members who earlier had voted for the resolutions had remained to hear or question Mowlana, excepting Bonker and Fascell. They offered rather lame assurances that his views would be considered in actions by the full committee. But they chose not to pursue the sharp contrast of Mowlana's testimony with that of previous witnesses—three drafters of the Congressional resolutions in question; two U.S. Government officials; and six news media representatives.