

X11 INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:UNESCO

The Australian Government's policy concerning UNESCO and the stated intention of the U.S. to withdraw from that organization was the subject of an answer to a question addressed to the Foreign Minister relating to the Hon. Gough Whitlam, Australian Ambassador to UNESCO (Hansard, Debates, House of Representatives, 2 March 1982):

AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR: UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

Mr COLEMAN - Has the attention of the Minister for Foreign Affairs been drawn to reports that the Australian Ambassador to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation has recently been rebuked by the United States of America State Department for his repeated public attacks on the United States? Was the Ambassador in fact rebuked? If so, in making those attacks has the Ambassador been following instructions from the Australian Government? If not, will the Minister take steps to ensure that the Ambassador follows his instructions?

Mr HAYDEN - I suggest that, knowing the Australian Ambassador to UNESCO, if the American State Department, or even the Secretary of State of the United States, sought to rebuke him he would retaliate rather vigorously and unambiguously and make it clear that he was not answerable to any foreign power, albeit a very friendly one. It would be most improper to suggest that any other power would seek to rebuke any Australian representative in the terms which the honourable member has suggested. I can assure the honourable member that in respect of Australia's very distinguished Ambassador to UNESCO that has not happened. More than that, from what I can establish from checking records and making contacts through my Department, the Australian Ambassador to UNESCO has not contradicted or failed to fulfil the instructions issued to him by the Australian Government.

We have expressed our concern at the stated intention of the United States of America to withdraw from UNESCO. We regard it as a very genuine and certainly a very serious declaration of intent. We wish the United States to remain in UNESCO. We acknowledge that there have been some defects in its administration and operation in the past. That is true of many institutions, including the previous Government of this country. However, we also wish to use our good offices to encourage the Americans to change their attitude. The Australian Ambassador to UNESCO, Mr Gough Whitlam, has been asked to do that and, according to the accounts I have received, has sought to do that.