FICE: Striving to Build a World in Which Children Can Live

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ABSTRACT: The International Federation of Educative Communities, a non-governmental organization with consultative status at UNESCO, has evolved from an organization designed to assist war-damaged young people after World War II, into a progressive international organization protecting and promoting the social, educational, and nurturing interests of children and youth. An overview of the key figures, stages of organizational development, and involvement of the 21 member countries is provided.

Introduction, by Steen M. Lasson, President, FICE-International

We live in an era when striving for peace and international understanding becomes a general, almost a universal policy. While international relations between states are fraught with economic interests and ideological differences, burdened with formalities, the relations among international professional organizations, associations, and individuals can be informal, friendly, and free of all tension.

Indeed, FICE's familiar, friendly and harmonious atmosphere is second to none. The objective of our organization—the well-being of
socially, physically and mentally handicapped children—might have contributed to FICE's unique character.

Forty-one years ago a few progressively minded, warm-hearted, internationalist educators established FICE. Its executives, with the help of UNESCO, have during the years expanded its scope step by step, to the present membership of 21 National Sections. Today, FICE is a unique international organization protecting social, educational and nurturing interests—a non-governmental organization (NGO) with consultative status at UNESCO.

FICE has proved its value in order to support the national sections in innovating child and youth care to modern standards. Therefore, FICE is an advising body of importance to many national governments.

FICE defends the rights of children and youth irrespective of nationality, race, or religion and is specially concerned with children and youth who grow up in conditions which arrest their physical, emotional, and social development.

FICE seeks to facilitate the development of social education, including residential care, by:

• organizing international conferences and work groups
• publishing relevant materials concerning contemporary problems
• arranging exchanges for professional child and youth care workers
• consulting with governmental and political organizations
• stimulating research
• encouraging the exchange of ideas and the making of friendships among professional workers in the social educational field
• promoting holiday camps for children and youth.

In political and religious matters, FICE is neutral. It rejects racial discrimination. FICE members are expected to agree with the fundamental tenets of the United Nations and UNESCO.

The FICE national sections are organized in various ways. Usually they consist of a variety of institutions and organizations such as residential care homes, homes and workshops for disabled persons, and education and training centers for professional staff. They also include individual members drawn from the ranks of professional staff, social scientists, representatives of government agencies, and many friends.

I am pleased that at our 40th Anniversary Congress in St. Gallen, Switzerland in 1988, James Anglin (Canada) and Karen VanderVen (U.S.A.) were admitted as representatives for FICE-North America, which was granted full membership, having been an associate member since 1986. Raymond Peterson (U.S.A.), as an initial FICE-North America delegate, also contributed to its early development.

The remainder of this article is a shortened version of the history of