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Colloque international sur le thème

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Genève — 2-4 juin 1993

SESSION III — DISCUSSION

D. BRAMWELL:

You should know that Terry Keller was given a special award by the Park's Council of New York City for all this work she's been doing last year and I think it's very very well deserved.

[Applaudissements]

W. MCK. KLEIN:

Do we have measures to effectively evaluate the educational programs that take place in botanic gardens?

J. WILLISON:

There are two ways of evaluating. When you set your objectives at the beginning, there's always short-term objectives and long-term objectives. I think this is something that BGCI is trying to encourage. With the publications that we do, we encourage people to set their objectives. I think that you can see with many programmes the short-term objectives are definitely achieved. As far as long-term objectives are concerned, how do you measure behaviour changes and over what distance time? I think it's a long-term process.

G. BROMLEY:

At Kew, one of the criterion in education policy is that we set both short-term and long-term goals. I always said that this year was the year for evaluation and consolidation. It doesn't always work like that actually, because there are so many other programmes going on. We do actually evaluate all the courses that we do through questionnaires. Now we are going back into the schools to see what follow-up programmes there has been, whether there has been a development in the schools in terms of their environmental education programme. With the adults, we also evaluate the adult education courses after each course itself. Now again, we are going back to people after one year or two years of having done the course to see how they have progressed, if they have in fact found employment or use their skills in some way. But as Julia says, in terms of environmental education as a whole, it is very difficult to measure that change in attitude because it is such a long-term process. But we can at least start to measure some of things that we've already said.

F. GINGINS:

Nous avons mené en Suisse un projet d'éducation pour l'environnement avec l'OCDE, s'adressant à 30 classes. Ces classes ont utilisé la "recherche-action" pendant tout le projet. C'est-à-dire que les maîtres ont documenté leur enseignement. Ils ont fait passer des questionnaires aux enfants sur les types d'enseignement qu'ils recevaient et ont répondu à des interviews. Des travaux de longue haleine sont réalisés en classe avec des techniques d'évaluation qu'on nomme "recherche-action". Elles sont valables et montrent que la responsabilisation des élèves progresse.

G. BROMLEY:

Can I just add one last thing? Particularly on the school side, I think the ultimate test in evaluating how effective botanic gardens are in running their programmes is when the education authorities or the government actually change their education policy to include environmental education in a real way and, like the Australian people, list botanic gardens as major resource to be used. I think that's a good measure too of whether we have also reached the decision-makers.

M. FAY:

Why are not all the botanic gardens of the world (1500-1600 approx.) involved in education programmes, especially when we have seen how successful they can be?

J. WILLISON:

My answer to that is that I can only presume that directors are not convinced of the importance of education. If they think it's important enough I believe that they would put the resources into it, to actually run an education programme. You can start with little resources, you see it's important enough, you'll do it. That's my belief.

G. BROMLEY:

Can I add something to that too, Mike? I think you're probably aware of our situation at Kew too. It's very difficult for staff in botanic gardens to, be allowed to give their time to aid the education programmes because they have a lot of their own work to do and a lot of research. I do think it's very important that those directors that are here actually make sure perhaps that if it's written into scientific staff contracts that they are credited also with doing education work, then they are much more likely to be able to give their time and get value for it, and we will get value for it too. But I do think it has to come from the top down, the encouragement that this is an accredited part of their work and that they are getting credit for it.

T. KELLER:

As far as my work in The New York Botanical Garden, it was not really thought of by The New York Botanical Garden. It was suggested to the president of the botanical garden by the Bronx borough president, to do a program in collaboration to beautify The Bronx. He was willing to put his money to where his mouth was. He funded the program for the first year. The New York Botanical Garden certainly did not have the money to do that. After that, I went out, and I funded it. I did it because The New York Botanical Garden was ready to scrap the program because they had no money. I thought it was just terribly important. What I did was to take a dog-and-pony show on the circuit and I showed slides to a lot of people. I also brought a lot of prospective funders, corporations, banks, foundations, private individuals, into the gardens to talk to the people who were doing the gardening and they heard from the people how much this program meant to them. I don't think there has been one person that has not written a check.

[Applaudissements.]

D. RAE:

There is a greater need for botanic garden educators to work with the managers of the live plant collections. The two should not work in isolation. The basis for this is a questionnaire I ran recently which showed, not surprisingly, that botanic garden educators, through the children and adults they educate are the greatest users of the live plant collection (far greater than scientists or conservationists, for instance), yet they have virtually no involvement in garden designs or plant selection. Garden staff usually design new areas without any consultation with others (especially educators). This is a great missed opportunity for useful in novative garden designs.

G. BROMLEY:

Yes, I would like to endorse that particuliar comment too. We were quite interrested to hear this morning from somebody whose education staff is actively working with the scientific staff to look at the curation policy, to involve them in developing garden areas so that there's a great involvement of both the gardening staff, the science staff and the education staff. It's something that we should all work towards because we're all working for the same goal. I think sometimes that gets lost somehow: education over there, and science over there. But it is difficult because the directors must have a role to play in actually seeing that there is that very close communication and close association. If everybody works to lobby for this people will get there in the end, I hope.