

Belgrade, Yugoslavia  
July 3, 1972

Dear Mrs. Rasmussen,

The things you wrote in your letter of May 30 (which reached me only two days ago because of my frequent displacements during the month of June) are precisely the reasons why we need to have you at Balira Blanca next November 21-25 and why I am delighted that you are willing to come. The two previous conferences dealt chiefly with secondary education and had enough influence to be considered as one of the chief impulses resulting in modern mathematics curricula in the public schools of Chile, Argentina, and Venezuela. The second conference inspired the Mexicans to organize a very active association for the improvement of secondary school mathematics and the preparation of mathematics teachers. Rather surprisingly, Mexico has been very slow to see the need for such improvement and it was only when university professors interested themselves in the problem that things began to change. Now, as you note, the time seems to be ripe for a more serious discussion of primary school mathematics, as more and more Latin American educators and politicians realize that they have to make a great effort with very high priority to establish true mass education in their countries. In doing so, they need to know what is best in educational theory and how it can be adapted to the various circumstances prevailing in their own countries.

At Balira Blanca we plan to discuss four topics that represent areas (rather far apart from each other) in which rather pressing problems are emerging. The other three are: education in computer science; the transition from school to university; the teaching of applied mathematics in schools, universities, and technical colleges. We shall have one day for each of our four topics, with formal presentations and discussions, and hope that there will be opportunity for informal discussions outside the organized part of the program. We have tried to provide speakers from Europe and the Americas who can contribute in significant ways to the program as outlined but we are still uncertain as to how our efforts are going to work out.

Unfortunately, we are having some difficulty in securing funds and other forms of support, and in those cases where we have good reason to believe that help will eventually be forthcoming we still do not have final decisions. From the Argentine government, OAS, and UNESCO we have about \$16,000 in hand but we are in need of more direct support for some of our speakers. In the United States we are getting very little encouragement from NSF and others who contributed to the first two conferences. In particular we do not have U.S. funds out of which we can pay your expenses, though I think we can find the means to do so tucked away in various corners. I hope therefore that you will optimistically plan to attend and make tentative arrangements for any formal leave you may need, etc., etc.

Of course, if you can suggest any sources of support (HEW, foundations, etc.) that we have not yet tried, I shall be diligent in finding out whether any help can be obtained from them. In particular I know very little about possibilities in HEW and in AID. These two organizations appear to have had some interest in overseas primary school mathematics but I do not know to whom I should write about the Balira Blanca conference. Perhaps you can ferret out some information that would be helpful. I have put these particular questions to people at NSF but have received no information from them so far.

It begins to look as though Dienes would not get support from the Canadian government and would not come, but I am not sure that the last word has been said. The British Council has agreed to bring one person from Great Britain and we have asked that it should be Miss Biggs. Prof. and Mrs. Papy seem quite confident that the Belgian government will send Frederique and we have made all the formal requests appropriate in the circumstances, but we do not yet have a decision.

Dr. Mario Leyton, director of the Instituto de Perfeccionamiento, etc., in Santiago, has asked to speak, probably on the methods being used by his Institute for in-service training of teachers. If you were to talk with no one else, conversations with him could be very fruitful. However, there will be people from all over Latin America, not in very large number (perhaps 60 at the most) but quite influential in their own countries. Furthermore, UNESCO has guaranteed the publication of the proceedings and recommendations of the conference and has commissioned Howard Fehr to prepare a report on developments in Latin American mathematical education since the first conference (Bogata, 1961). Thus whatever you want to say at the conference in Balira Blanca will have a wide audience, including some Ministers of Education and people on their staffs.

I believe the occasion warrants the preparation of a carefully thought out statement of your views and of your ideas about the practical implementation of theoretically desirable, experimentally tested curricular and pedagogical developments in primary school mathematics. If you could prepare your paper in advance we could have it translated into Spanish and could distribute it at the conference at an appropriate moment before or after its presentation. Actually, a large number of those present will understand English though of course they would be flattered to have you speak Spanish or Portuguese.

Now, to change the subject abruptly, I would like to mention another matter about which I may eventually want to consult you. For several years I have worked on a project of Howard Fehr's aimed at preparing a very advanced secondary school mathematics program for gifted, college-bound students. The resulting curriculum and texts are strong in algebra, computation, and probability and statistics; quite good in calculus; and a bit weak in geometry and explicitly treated logic. After pretty thorough testing and revision it looks as though we had a viable program ahead of most others in the U.S, or elsewhere. Now with the cooperation of the New York City Schools we hope to rework the material with about 60% of the high school population as the stratum we hope to reach. I believe your experiences with younger children have a good deal to teach us if suitably reinterpreted, so I hope you will be willing to consult with us at some time.

I enclose a small slip of paper with my various addresses so you can communicate your reactions to this description of the conference, etc.

Cordially,

Marshall Stone