

A UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION

INTRODUCTION

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THE United Nations Educational and Cultural Conference that opened in London on November 1 has been called to prepare the establishment of a United Nations Organisation for promoting educational and cultural co-operation.

It is natural that a new effort towards world co-operation in the cultural field should occur after the devastations of the Second World War. We wish to repair the damage to our friends and ourselves as quickly as possible.

This is particularly serious in the cultural field. The damage that the enemy has done to things of the mind is even more appalling than the terrible material destruction for which he is responsible. Vile ideas have been instilled into the young, and the best traditions of research and learning have been debased.

The chief way by which the victims can be restored to civilization is by education and rehabilitation. It is, however, impossible to teach and to train the mind in research and rational inquiry without schools, and apparatus and laboratories.

One of the main aims of the Conference will be to create an Organisation that will help to achieve this restoration.

A second matter of equal importance is the promotion of educational, scientific and cultural co-operation in the future. Men of science will expect that due weight should be given to science in the conceptions and machinery of the new Organisation.

The place of science in the structure and outlook of modern civilization has been growing steadily for generations. Almost every aspect of production, transport, nutrition, health and the primary needs of life are dependent on it. The influence on modes of thought in research and learning, and spiritual attitudes, is equally great. The application of the scientific mode of thought to the problems of man and society is perhaps our chief hope for the future. But we cannot utilize it if we do not know what it is. We want to see the restoration and improvement of education, with appropriate weight given to science, in view of its contemporary importance.

The latest developments of atomic energy make the need for the understanding and use of science yet a thousandfold greater.

Thus it is profoundly necessary that science should have due place both in the conceptions and aims of the new Organisation, and in its machinery.

The most perfect plan and organization will not work, however, without finance and public support, and these must be based on public approval.

Another point of equal importance is the question of priorities. It is essential that the Organisation should be able to secure the needed equipment, after it has acquired the adequate finance. Teaching and research cannot be done without apparatus, scientific literature, and communications.

Men of science throughout the world hope that the Conference will have every success, and that, as a result of the discussions, a new Organisation will be

established which will strengthen existing scientific collaboration and create new links where they are needed.

SCIENCE AND THE UNITED NATIONS

By DR. JULIAN HUXLEY, F.R.S.

THE proposals for the new United Nations Educational and Cultural Organisation were first put forward by the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education, which has sat in London since 1941, and in some of its later work was assisted by a delegation from the United Nations. This body was originally concerned with the immediate and essentially short-term task of securing the educational and cultural reconstruction of those parts of Europe and Asia which had suffered cultural distortion or destruction at the hands of the Axis Powers; and in April 1944 it formulated proposals designed to meet these needs. At San Francisco, however, this aim was extended and generalized, and it was proposed that a permanent special agency of the United Nations, devoted to educational and cultural tasks, should be established. The present Conference is engaged on the problems of giving final form to the draft charter of the Organisation put forward by the Allied Education Ministers, and broadly outlining its main aims and functions and of delimiting its field of action; after which it will set up an interim commission to work out details and to prepare the ground for the first full Conference to be held about a year hence.

Another historical point is also relevant. Since the original sponsoring body was a Conference of Education Ministers, the present Conference is one of delegations appointed by the Ministries of Education of the United Nations, convened by the British Ministry of Education, and presided over by the British Education Minister. Further, the emphasis in the original proposals was largely upon education. Some stress was later laid on culture, and the word 'Cultural' was included in the proposed title; but in spite of the fact that the Allied Education Ministers had a sub-committee to deal with scientific questions, science received less consideration, and proposals to include the word 'Scientific' in the title were at first rejected.

The Ministry of Education has now invited comments from a large number of bodies concerned with the educational, cultural and scientific life of Britain, and undoubtedly the replies of the scientific bodies will have ensured that the fullest consideration will be given by the British Delegation, and may we assume by the Conference as a whole, to the claims of science. However, there is no harm in rehearsing here some of the considerations which occur to most men of science who have given thought to this important subject.

In the first place, they consider it essential that the word 'Science' or 'Scientific' should occur in the title of the Organisation—that, in transatlantic phrase, the Conference should put the S in UNESCO. Opposition to this appears to come from two quarters