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HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE

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DURING the first autumn of the Second World War a Declaration of Human Rights was drafted by Mr. H. G. Wells, who suggested that it should be adopted as a statement of Allied aims and an expression of the spirit in which we face life in general. More than nine years later the essence of the ten clauses proposed by Mr. Wells has found expression in the thirty articles of the Charter of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in Paris on December 10. Much that has happened in the interval has engendered a certain scepticism as to the value of what can equally be described as a Declaration of Peace Aims. The long debates and discussions of the past two and a half years which have issued in the Charter seem at times to encourage the view that it is essentially a manifesto of ideological warfare expressing the ideals and beliefs of Western civilization.

Any such cynicism should be checked by the realization that no government in existence, even in the Western world, is able to guarantee to all its citizens all the rights laid down. These rights are proclaimed for everyone without distinction of any kind, and the Declaration is clearly meant to apply equally to those who are furthest from attaining them. Only the last two articles, with their emphasis on duties and responsibilities, in any way limit those rights. "Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible"; and the only limitations on the exercise of human rights and freedoms are declared to be such as are determined by law "solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society".

Safeguarding the State may obviously be made an excuse; but the exercise of State interference in accordance with elastic interpretations of democracy is limited by the final article: "Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein". Moreover, the inclusion of such reservations in a separate general article does not detract from the strength of the rest so much as would a succession of reservations to the individual articles. It is also worth noting that there has been a surprising degree of unanimity in adopting the successive provisions, and that this provision of a common standard of achievement is to lead to a later international covenant which will be even more binding.

Certain of the articles are vague, and the differing interpretations of such words as 'freedom', 'impartial', or 'protection' is bound to introduce some uncertainty, particularly in the economic field, at least until some such common tradition as lies at the basis of Western Union becomes of world-wide validity. Nevertheless, many of the articles can scarcely be misunderstood, and they supply strong support for

the individual or the professional association in any demands for fulfilment they may have to make upon the State. There was, indeed, strong resistance from the Communist bloc to the inclusion of the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State, of the right of a person to leave his own or any other country and to return, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the sharing of the common cultural life; but the majority of the United Nations declared firmly for the provision of universality at the start of the Declaration and the sufficiency of the reservations at the end.

Clearly the Declaration embodies the principles which men of science have long held to be essential for the full vigour of a fruitful scientific and creative life, and the debates from which the Declaration has emerged can leave them in no doubt as to where the real dangers to scientific activity lie to-day. The Declaration obviously calls for close consideration from the Committee on Science and its Social Relations, and from the General Assembly of the International Council of Scientific Unions, in view of the resolution adopted by the latter Assembly in July 1946 and a subsequent declaration on the principles of a charter for scientific men since adopted by the Committee. It equally deserves consideration by that growing body of scientific workers concerned with ways in which science could help towards the maintenance of peace.

A comprehensive report on science and the maintenance of peace has been prepared for the Committee on Science and its Social Relations, but an interim report was issued by B. J. Bok, chairman of the U.S. National Research Council Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, for use at the Boston meeting of the United States National Commission on the latter body in September 1948. In that report, Mr. Bok attempted an analysis of the twenty-two replies received to two questions addressed during the summer to some forty representative scientific workers. Replies to the first question, dealing with the measure in which the methods of international scientific work contribute to the creation of an international spirit and to the maintenance of peace, almost all stress the international character of science. Many clearly feel strongly that, because of the special nature of their work, they are in a favoured position with regard to international collaboration, though some believe that scientific contact alone has comparatively little to do with securing peace.

Much stress was laid in the replies to this question on the effectiveness of international exchanges of scientific workers at all levels, and on the value of international exchanges of scientific literature and advances in scientific abstracting. Moreover, the replies recognize the importance in this connexion of several projects undertaken by the Natural Sciences Department of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, such as the establishment of the Field Science Co-operation Offices, the Hylean-Amazon Institute and the work

on scientific reconstruction. One reply emphasized that the method of science assists men to put aside the conventional reactions and prejudices that hinder our understanding of unfamiliar things; and that the evolutionary character of scientific theories helps to provide the flexibility of mind necessary for the maintenance of peace in a world so varied and diverse. The principle of freedom of inquiry, it is claimed, is a great asset in the maintenance of world peace because it is hard to reconcile with doctrinaire politics and dogmatic adherence to particular social or political theories. Whether or not this belief is too optimistic—and it was strongly attacked by implication by Dr. A. P. Lehner in his comments in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Association* on a suggestion that scientific men and engineers should refuse to participate in weapons research and development—this view indicates sufficiently why the man of science cannot wisely neglect to support the Declaration of Human Rights, or to follow with interest the activities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

The replies received to the second question, referring to the ways in which scientific organisations and individuals could intensify their activities for the maintenance of peace, yielded a number of suggestions with which the activities of Unesco are wholly in line, notably those in connexion with the forthcoming Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources. Strong support was forthcoming for continuing the work of the international scientific unions and for increasing personal contacts among scientific men all over the world.

Nevertheless, the prevailing opinion seems to have been that it is a matter of hope rather than of history that the increasing knowledge of the world, improved communications and transport of goods and raised standards of living can minimize the causes of war by reducing stimuli to aggression. Prof. H. C. Urey sees the establishment of world government as our ultimate aim, but despite the general agreement that science fosters peace rather than war, Dr. K. T. Compton is supported in his view that the responsibilities for peace of scientific workers are just the same as those of any other group of citizens. He does not believe that it is feasible or, in the long run, safe for men of science to attempt to exert their own controls on the products of their work; and in this view Dr. H. N. Russell concurs, pointing out that the maintenance of peace is so entangled with sincere differences of social and political belief that it would be unwise for scientific organisations, as such, to endorse any particular programme. Dr. Lehner develops this point more particularly in his article in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Association* already noted, and shows the difficulties to which the assumption by men of science of special responsibilities in this way would lead. There is no solution, he urges, in giving power to leaders of science, for they, too, are men; and the economist comes firmly down on the same side, urging that the most those who want peace can do is to try to

guide their fellow men by participation in political action for the world government that is necessary for peace.

At the meeting at Boston on September 28 when this interim report was discussed, Dr. A. H. Compton suggested that there are four ways in which it is appropriate for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation to use science towards the maintenance of peace. The first is by emphasis on human values; science and technology should be considered as means for attaining these values. The second is insistence on freedom and honesty in our search for knowledge. Next comes the development of science on a world-wide front, giving the opportunity for scientific men themselves to become the prototypes of the world citizen and thus to provide for all nations natural channels of human intercourse with their neighbours. Finally, there is the encouragement of the growth of science and technology throughout the world. Dr. Compton appears to regard this last as the most powerful existing force working towards world peace.

These suggestions were generally approved at that meeting, and a resolution adopted for forwarding to the United States National Commission urged that scientific men should work for the maintenance of peace in four ways: (a) They can emphasize and develop the human values associated with science and technology, and (b) insist on freedom in their search for knowledge. (c) Because of the natural oneworldness of their fields, they can consciously serve as prototypes of world citizens, and (d) by systematically promoting international co-operation, they can contribute directly to world integration and the construction of the defences of peace.

The subsequent report of the Committee of Science and its Social Relations issued in November 1948 gives an analysis of some seventy replies to the two questions, but its trend is sufficiently well shown by Bok's interim report, although some of the individual opinions quoted in the final report deserve attention. Generally, the replies to the first question testify to the existence of an international spirit among men of science, and regard its existence as favourable to the development of other aspects of international co-operation, in particular that of union, because men devoted to honesty, objectivity and freedom of scientific investigation, whatever their nationality, influence favourably other fields of human relations. Although one group of replies to the first question considers that men of science can exert a direct influence on the political world, either by appropriate public declarations or by the formulation of moral or ethical codes of conduct, the great majority see the most favourable possibilities of action in their normal activities. All correspondents, however, were unanimous in insisting on the necessity of intensifying their support of the projects for co-operation initiated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and by the international unions. Indeed, the whole inquiry brings out once more the independence of the scientific attitude, and the general belief among men of science that the fundamental contribution of science to world peace

lies in the support it gives to freedom of thought, investigation and publication and the free circulation both of ideas and of men.

Little fresh has thus come out of the inquiry, and it may well be urged that the value of scientific work in creating an international spirit and encouraging the movement of thought across national frontiers needed no such demonstration. Nevertheless, some of the replies are valuable as indicating the dangers that lurk in proposals for direct political action by men of science as such. Perhaps more important is the demonstration of the existence of a substantial body of opinion which is following the activities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation with interest and is capable of the cogent and constructive criticism of its activities which the Organisation needs. It is unfortunate, whatever the cause, that so little interest is taken in those activities in Great Britain. Parliament is obviously not interested, and there is no indication whether the universities, the professional organisations, the Churches and those practical people engaged in education, science and cultural activities generally are satisfied that the right projects are being attempted in the right way. A vigorous defence of the general purpose and policy of the Organisation was, it is true, offered by Mr. Ronald Gould at the recent conference on higher education held by the National Union of Teachers in London. Mr. Gould was careful to distinguish between criticism of administration, which might be merited, and destructive criticism of objectives.

However sound the fundamental conception of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, that purpose of fostering co-operation and understanding among all peoples will only be achieved through the free flow of thought and expression throughout the world. The close support and keen interest of scientific workers is as essential a factor here as their support, interest and criticism are for the formulation of practical projects by which international co-operation and understanding can be furthered. The general indifference to the proceedings of the Organisation's recent meeting at Beirut is the more disappointing, for there was evidence that an attempt is being made to rectify past mistakes. Plain speaking is still required, and the most hopeful feature of the inquiry set on foot by the Committee on Science and its Social Relations is that it shows there are responsible men of science in the International Council of Scientific Unions who recognize the potentialities of Unesco, and whose standing ensures a hearing for any criticism they may have cause to make of its programme or administration. If such criticism is to be fully effective and this means of using science for furthering the maintenance of peace is to succeed, there must be public as well as scientific scrutiny; and one duty which scientific workers as citizens should undertake is to see that the projects of such an international body are rigorously scrutinized, the good approved and supported, and the weak exposed firmly but constructively as the obstacles they are in truth to the cause of international understanding.