

Progress at UNESCO

U. N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

By DONN V. HART

IN the autumn of 1946, Julian Huxley visited New York for the opening of the General Assembly of the United Nations. While attending an informal gathering, he was introduced to an individual who failed to catch his name. "I beg your pardon, sir" the man inquired.

"Julian Huxley of Unesco," Dr. Huxley repeated slowly.

"Oh, this is an honor," the listener replied enthusiastically, "to meet a person from such a gallant, little country as Unesco."

In the early days of Unesco's existence, others confused the term with an American biscuit trade-mark or thought it the name of a Roumenian statesman. Much of this confusion has disappeared to-day for Unesco is gradually becoming a member of the small but growing group of universal words, transcending the barriers of language. It is important that the peoples of the world recognize and understand the meaning of the term for the creation of Unesco was a tremendous stride forward in the direction of permanent peace and progress.

"The establishment of Unesco during 1946 as an intergovernmental agency moving within the framework of the United Nations and charged with serious responsibilities in matters of education, science, and culture is . . . in some respects a milestone in the intellectual history of mankind; it marks a revolution in the concept of international relations."¹ The establishment of Unesco is the fulfillment of many centuries of labor and activity on the part of hundreds of educators and individuals working in many countries of the world.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Donn V. Hart, who is on the staff of the Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs of Syracuse University, has been a member of the Preparatory Council of UNESCO in London and Paris in 1946.

(1) Wilson, Howard E., "Unesco and the Universities," *Harvard Educational Review*, Winter, 1947, page 45.

Unesco is not a sudden, exotic mutation of the Twentieth Century; its historical roots can be, in some ways, traced as far back as the universities of medieval Europe. An attempt was made to include an organization somewhat similar to Unesco in the League of Nations after World War I; the effort was unsuccessful. Later an International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation was established under the aegis of the League to act as a consultant body. The Committee accomplished a great deal but its scope and activities were severely limited, particularly in the field of education. A few years later the International Bureau of Education was launched in Geneva which conducted research studies in the psychology of learning, and published scores of books on teacher-education, and other aspects of learning. Both were steps forward on the road leading to Unesco.

But these organizations and other similar were not adequate to serve the growing needs that developed in the field of international education, science, and culture. One of the major differences between international planning in 1918-19 and in 1945-46 is the recognition in the years following World War II of the vital role of education, science, and culture in achieving world cooperation, in solving international problems, and in safeguarding peace.

At the San Francisco United Nations conference, a niche was created in the Charter for an agency in education and culture within the organization of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. In November, 1945, an international conference was held at London, attended by 44 governments. There the letters of the word Unesco were put together, science being added to the term. A Constitution was written,

and submitted to the governments for ratification. Unesco was to come into legal existence when 20 nations had formally accepted the organization's Constitution. That number was obtained in September, 1946; by October, 1947, 31 nations had joined Unesco.² At the London Conference a Preparatory Commission was established to organize the specialized agency and develop a program for 1947 by which Unesco's Constitution could be put into action. "The purpose of the Organization," declares Article 1 of the Unesco Constitution, "is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science, and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language, or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations." This is, indeed, a charter for all mankind.

The first Executive Secretary of Pre-Unesco, as it was called, was the brilliant English scholar, Sir Alfred Zimmermann. Ill health forced him to retire from this taxing position and in February, 1946, Julian Huxley succeeded him. The Preparatory Commission worked valiantly to organize a competent Unesco staff and to prepare a program and budget for presentation to the delegates of the First General Conference which was held in Paris in November and December of 1946. The delegates to this Conference revised and approved the Unesco program for 1947 and voted a budget of \$6,000,000. At the Conference, Julian Huxley was elected Director-General of Unesco, to serve for only two years. This was an informal agreement proposed by Huxley. The Constitution

states the Director-General will be elected for a period of six years. Among the projects receiving specific approval and high priority a few may be listed as indicative of the lines of growth Unesco is likely to take in the immediate future. There are four principal projects which now engage most of Unesco's time and money.

Reconstruction

The first comprehensive project is educational, scientific and cultural reconstruction of countries, members of Unesco, which have been devastated by war. This project is being undertaken in close cooperation with world voluntary organizations. "Through Europe and Asia to-day there are thousands of schools reduced to rubble and debris. The institutions of higher learning are without adequate equipment. Libraries, museums, and laboratories have been pillaged or wrecked. There is an enormous demand for trained teachers to replace those lost during the war."³ These are only a few of the problems this project faces. A Temporary International Council for Educational Reconstruction has been created consisting of the representatives of 28 international voluntary organizations; the Council is to coordinate the efforts of all the groups in reconstruction. Unesco has furnished the Council with the necessary staff. A campaign to raise \$100,000,000 for use in this vital project has been in progress during 1947 and the present estimate is that \$72,000,000 worth of materials have already been collected.

Scientific reconstruction is also being carried on by Unesco. According to Walter Laves, Deputy Director-General of Unesco, the agency has "completed the collection of 50 laboratory sets of equipment—lathes, drills, hand tools, and some raw materials—for consignment to 41 selected laboratories in 5 countries.

2) Member-states of Unesco are: Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Greece, Haiti, India, Lebanon, Liberia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Philippine Republic, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Union of South Africa, United Kingdom, United States, and Venezuela. The Soviet Union is not a member of Unesco, having remained aloof from the organization from the beginning.

(3) *World Programme of Unesco*, page 7. This short but excellent 32-page booklet is available by writing to Unesco Sales Service, 19 Avenue, Kleber, Paris. The booklet is a brief and simple summary of Unesco's activities in 1947. It is also printed in French.

Forty-one sets are crated and addressed and delivery should be completed by the end of October. These sets provide a small step toward revival of scientific research by people who have now no other hope of securing equipment for the reconstruction of minimum essential laboratories." For the last six months, a monthly bulletin on library book needs in devastated countries and of available surpluses has been printed by Unesco. Many bombed, burned or looted libraries in war-damaged countries have received books through this activity.

Fundamental Education

Fundamental Education, the second major project of Unesco, is perhaps the most ambitious in its implications. Fundamental Education, as defined by Dr. Howard E. Wilson, former Deputy Director-General of Pre-Unesco, is a "world attack on illiteracy both for children and for adults. It involves work in the primary schools and work at the adult level. It involves learning to read—but learning to read about things of immediate consequence. It is related to health programs, programs of vocational education, and with elementary aspects of international understanding." Since "a large number of governments and private groups throughout the world are working independently to cure this great social ill of ignorance, one of Unesco's initial tasks is to co-ordinate and to stimulate the many campaigns. Unesco serves also as an international clearing-house for the exchange and wide diffusion of information on the latest techniques and materials being used throughout the world in combating illiteracy and in raising educational levels. Unesco brings together leading experts to exchange ideas and to advance the work in their own fields of activity."

Unesco has an official representative in Haiti at present to assist and advise the Haitian government on a "pilot project" in Fundamental Education in

Jaemel, a community with an area of 20 square miles and a population of 26,000 people. Unesco plans to assist the government in bringing the "most advanced teaching aids and techniques . . . to this remote rural section of a nation 75 per cent of whose total population of 3,000,000 is unable to read or write. Emphasis in this 'pilot project' will be placed particularly on education for better hygiene, for improved agricultural methods, and on community welfare, as well as on the problem of illiteracy."⁵

In September a conference was held at Nanking, China, in co-operation with the Chinese Government, which was attended by experts in the field of Fundamental Education from many parts of Asia. Unesco's Director of Education, Dr. Kuo, was sent as well as two assistants. One of the purposes of this conference was to co-ordinate and facilitate the activities and exchange of information among those working in this field in Asia. It is planned to establish two more "pilot projects," one in China, and another in British East Africa in the near future; Unesco will send advisors to each of these projects. Another regional conference is to be held in Mexico City concurrently with the Second General Conference of Unesco. This program of Fundamental Education has been called by one of the delegates to the First General Conference of Unesco as "the biggest thing since the abolition of slavery."

International Understanding

The promotion of international understanding, through teacher seminars, the improvement of textbooks and other teaching materials, by serving and promoting youth clubs, furthering adult education,¹ international study centres and the exchange of persons, is Unesco's third comprehensive project. This summer, from 20 July to 30 August, a Seminar

(5) For a general description of the Haitian project, see article by author in *School and Society*, "Unesco Goes to Work in Haiti," Volume 66, Number 1707, 13 September 1947, page 204.

(4) *World Programme of Unesco*, page 9.

on Education for International Understanding was held at Sevres, France, under the sponsorship of Unesco. The Seminar attracted 82 individuals from 31 different nations. Housed in a historic palace just outside Paris, the members of the Seminar heard informal talks by such notables as Gilbert Murray and Leon Blum, and worked on projects concerned with international relations and the influence of the cultural environment in different countries on individual growth during adolescence. Dr. Howard E. Wilson was appointed Director of the Seminar which was a major success and Unesco hopes to repeat such informal study groups in 1948. Dr. Wilson has written that "During the six-weeks period these people came to know each other as friends and co-workers. Group morale, at first low, because the Seminar began as an aggregation of strangers, rose steadily . . . there was no discrimination in living arrangements or in Seminar work on such bases as race or religion or economic status or nationality. . . Each person in the Seminar taught others about his or her own country and about their country's assumptions and practices respecting educational problems in which all were intensely interested. People who came together as strangers, separated as friends." From all the evidence and reports available at this date, it appears the Seminar has become a permanent landmark in the history of education for international understanding.

At a September meeting of the Temporary International Council for Educational Reconstruction, it was announced that the first international work camp to be set up in Greece will open near Retimo, in Crete, early in 1948. The report from Unesco House states that "The site for the camp has been selected on the advice of Unesco following a mission of inquiry

on its behalf carried out by a specialist in order to discover the country's most urgent needs in the field of educational reconstruction." The camp will begin by rebuilding schools and community centres of two villages destroyed by the Germans during World War II.

With the assistance of Leonard Kenworthy, American educator on the Unesco Secretariat, the organization is working with international relations clubs in schools and colleges, aiding in the exchange of information between the clubs of various nations.

It has long been accepted by many educators that one of the best methods of improving international understanding is the revision of textbooks which contain inaccurate statements about different countries or fail to discuss a nation adequately. During 1947 Unesco has been working on a model method for textbook analysis which will furnish Member-States with a set of principles by which they may analyse their own textbooks and teaching materials. "This positive approach to the improvement of textbooks has been decided upon for the first year, rather than the negative approach of looking for misleading statements conducive to international misunderstandings."

International Scientific Institute

The fourth major project of Unesco is the establishment of an International Scientific Institute in the Hylean Amazon Region of Latin America to co-ordinate research activities and to provide a scientific basis for better living in this vast, little-known region of the equatorial forest zone. It is hoped that such an Institute, once established, would serve as a "local clearing-house for scientific information emanating from the region, and would correlate the activities of scientific expeditions exploring the area." The findings are to be made available to the world so that peoples living in other equatorial forest zones may also benefit from the knowledge and experience gained.

(6) For a more detailed account of this Seminar consult articles by author in *Social Studies*, October and November and December, 1947. The first article is a description of the Seminar and its activities, staff, and membership; the second is a critical examination of its achievements.

In April of this year Unesco scientists left Paris for Rio de Janeiro to make plans for a meeting of an international conference at Belem, Brazil, at the mouth of the Amazon River. This conference, held in August, and attended by six South American countries and by Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and the United States, did not make a positive recommendation that such an Institute be established. However, it did suggest certain functions which an Institute of that type could perform. Further discussion of the possibility of creating an Institute will be carried on at the Second General Conference at Mexico City.

A Field Science Co-operation Office has been established temporarily at Rio de Janeiro "to provide a channel of information between the Latin-American world and other parts of the scientific world, primarily with a view," so states the Deputy Director-General, "to increasing the flow of information between them and to stimulate co-operative research in important fields." Another similar office is in the process of organization at Nanking for East Asia and the Republic of the Philippines.

Other Tasks

These are only the four major projects of Unesco; the organization is engaged in many other important activities such as the organization of an International Theatre Institute, and an International Council of Museums, making a large-scale survey of the technical needs of war-damaged countries in the fields of the press, radio, and film as a step toward improving channels of communication between peoples. Such problems as quotas, tariffs, currency restrictions, and censorship regulations are being surveyed with a view to removing obstacles to the free international exchange of ideas.

Unesco's permanent headquarters is in Paris. Like the other specialized agencies, Unesco has an agreement with the United Nations⁷ and works in close co-operation with FAO, WHO, and the other specialized agencies. The Second General Conference of Unesco is being held at Mexico City this November and December. At this Conference, the delegates from the 31 member-states of Unesco will examine, make desired revisions, and approve the proposed program and proposed budget (approximately \$8,300,000) for 1948. It is believed a number of Latin American nations will join Unesco during the Conference period.

It is Unesco's belief, as its Constitution states, that "a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be found, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind." This does not mean a standardization of world culture; rather Unesco strives for national diversity within international unity. Peace treaties in the past which were based essentially on political and economic agreements have failed to maintain international harmony. Unesco, therefore, believes that since wars begin in the minds of men, and in their bellies, it is here also that the defenses of peace must be constructed. Unesco may not be successful in preventing another international armed conflict; certainly it is a challenging and vital⁸ part of the last best hope of mankind.

7) Howard E. Wilson, "The Development of Unesco," *International Conciliation*, May, 1947, Number 431. This valuable issue contains a discussion of Unesco written by Dr. Wilson after his return from Paris and includes Unesco's agreement with the United Nations, and other important Unesco documents.

(8) Bryon Dexter, assistant editor of *Foreign Affairs*, has written an outstanding article, "Unesco Faces Two Worlds," which was printed in this magazine April, 1947. This article discusses the general organization of Unesco and the major problem Unesco must face in the future, the absence of the Soviet Union from membership role.