



UNESCO'S PLANS FOR RADIO

Experts Keep Their Feet on the Ground

THESE days, scarcely a week of the year can pass without some conference of experts taking place in some part of the world on some topic of "global importance." In a good many cases the world hears little about such meetings beyond the fact that they have been held. As the result of one such conference, however, the world may possibly hear a great deal, for this was a conference of international experts on radio. It was convened by Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation) and held in Paris in August, its purpose being to consider plans for the international use of radio in the cause of world understanding and peace.

New Zealand was not included among the 15 nations represented at this meeting, though the four New Zealand delegates who are due to leave this week for the general Unesco Conference at Mexico will doubtless find themselves called on for a decision on some of the findings. But those in New Zealand who have had access to the deliberations and recommendations of the International Radio Network Conference in Paris are of the opinion that they indicate a realistic as well as a knowledgeable approach, and that, therefore, there is a better-than-usual chance that they will produce some valuable and, above all, practical results.

The most important decision made by this Committee of Experts, after hearing an account of plans for a United Nations Radio Network and the difficulties encountered by such a project, is that a separate Unesco Network is, at the moment, neither advisable nor feasible. If the proposed UN Network should be established, Unesco would co-operate with it in every way possible; and only if the UN Network failed to get going, should the question of establishing a Unesco Network be re-examined. In the meantime, Unesco should devote the greatest part of its activities in the radio field to the most extensive collaboration possible with existing national radio organisations; and in order to assist this policy, a permanent Programme Commission should be set up.

Having agreed on this as a recommended basis of action, the Committee of Experts went on to assess what Unesco is actually trying to do in the field of radio and, arising from this, what type of programmes should be sponsored. This discussion, judging by the reports, produced some interesting viewpoints; for instance, the opinion of the United States delegate that the over-riding aim of Unesco is the promotion of peace and security. All its work should be directly or indirectly related to this aim, though he didn't mean by this that Unesco should launch a propaganda campaign for pacifism. But the ultimate objective of Unesco was to extirpate the seeds of war from the minds of men, and to sow the seeds of peace; it therefore had both a positive and a negative aspect. On the negative side, which concerned the elimination of the causes of war, much could be done by the proper treatment of international news in the Press and on the radio, which had an immediate bearing on the attitudes of men. And on the positive side, Unesco must encourage attitudes favourable to peace, by means of Press and radio.

Understanding Not Enough

A controversial point was the question of international understanding. Understanding among men was not enough, argued the U.S. delegate—most of the wars in history had been between people who knew each other best, for example France and Germany before the First World War. The interchange of cultures was also not enough; he was, for example, sceptical about the value of exchanging musical programmes. (This viewpoint was by no means unanimously accepted by the delegates.) Because Unesco's resources were restricted, its plans must have a high degree of focus; it must choose two or three means of producing its ends by the radio, and concentrate only on these.

"Unesco also has a subsidiary objective. In view of the state of the world yesterday and to-day, it must try deliberately to build up consciousness of a world community. There is none at present and there may be none for many years to come, but one day there must be one. Unesco must somehow persuade men to identify themselves

with a world community which does not, in fact, yet exist. In order to establish this identification, Unesco must point out to men everywhere that their problems and desires are the same, although the ways in which they meet them vary. Unesco is not aiming at imposing uniformity of ways of life, but at showing how men can live together in peace in spite of the diversity of their ways of living."

Two practical suggestions arising from the above remarks were put forward: (1) Unesco should undertake a type of radio programme which would be a literal application of the idea of "Peoples speaking to Peoples"; coal-miners, workmen, housewives, students, etc., of different countries should discuss their particular problems with each other over the air.

(2) Unesco ought to describe to the world the accomplishments of men in meeting their problems and fulfilling their desires. There was a psychological crisis at the present time: men were submerged by a sense of their own inadequacy. They felt hopeless in the face of giant forces about which they could do nothing, just as they had felt dwarfed in the past by various great scientific discoveries. Unesco should, therefore, emphasise the conquest by man of his environment and give a message of hope to the world.

Concrete Proposals

Developing out of discussion along these lines, the following concrete recommendations were adopted by the Conference:

- (1) Programmes illustrating successful co-operation between nations in the fields of education, science and culture;
- (2) Interchange of views on day-to-day problems between the peoples of different countries in as direct a manner as possible;
- (3) Talks and features programmes prepared by broadcasters and producers visiting other countries depicting:
 - (a) Their impressions of the country they are visiting,
 - (b) The problems and aspirations of their native country.
- (4) Topical reportage giving information on the latest national developments and progress made in the fields of education, science and culture;
- (5) Talks and microphone interviews with international personalities on subjects of universal interest.

Another recommendation was passed to the effect that Unesco should provide

basic information and documentation on such subjects as new methods of radio broadcasting and techniques adopted in other countries; movements of personalities prominent in the fields of education, science, and culture, and cultural events in the fields of art, particularly music; scripts and sound tracks of high-quality reportage and feature productions of an educational character, supplied in the first instance to Unesco through the co-operation of national radio organisations; and basic programme material gathered from within the various sections of Unesco.

Dealing specifically with the question of exchanging programmes, the Committee of Experts recommended that national radio organisations should, whenever and as much in advance as possible, draw Unesco's attention to those of their broadcasts having special educational, scientific, or cultural value, and specially suited for rebroadcasting to other countries, so that Unesco's Radio Section may in turn draw the attention of the national radio organisations in other various countries to these broadcasts. Unesco would limit itself to supplying those radio organisations which might request it, with sound tracks (together with the corresponding scripts) so that these could be adapted to suit particular needs.

The Committee of Experts fully approved the steps already taken by Unesco to ask a number of broadcasting organisations each to prepare a programme on a given subject. These programmes will be assembled and distributed by Unesco—which means that, in exchange for a programme of its own making, each organisation will receive a substantial number of programmes framed in the same spirit.

School Broadcasts

A field of radio which attracted a great deal of attention, provoked some stimulating discussion, and produced one or two important recommendations was that of schools broadcasting. In the opinion of the Australian delegate, this was one of the most difficult and specialised fields for Unesco to operate in. In Australia, he said, there were different curricula in the different States, which necessitated programmes on different intellectual levels; and in the international field the problem would be still more difficult.

Eventually, the Committee of Experts came to the conclusion that the Unesco Radio Section must begin its

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