

A BALANCE OF TRADE IN EDUCATION

"THE present educational inequality between nations represents a danger to the peace of the world, which cannot become ONE if half of it is illiterate. . . . The world owes a duty to its less favoured peoples, not only in their interests, but in its own." These words from a statement by Archibald MacLeish, chairman of the drafting committee of the programme commission of Unesco, illustrate not only one of the major aims of Unesco—to improve the educational standards of under-developed countries—but also the field in which Unesco's most successful work has been done since its inception. It was to find out what practical achievements had been made in this field that "The Listener" interviewed the Director of Education, Dr. C. E. Beeby, who returned to New Zealand the other day after an absence of 18 months as Unesco's assistant Director-General.

WHAT, first of all, were Unesco's basic objectives in education? Dr. Beeby thought it should aim at achieving a certain minimum level of world education, and that it should also promote the desire among nations to use education for the improvement of international understanding. This did not mean that the Western nations should try to impose their educational ideas on other countries and reduce everything to one dead level—it would be better for Unesco to shut up shop completely than to attempt that. They had to recognise the values of other cultures and remember that our own particular brand of rather materialist progress was not necessarily the standard to which everything else should be attuned.

"Unesco should be regarded as an educational exchange market," he said. "And it should aim at achieving a balance of trade in education throughout the world."

The most pressing need was obviously an attack on illiteracy, and to this end Dr. Beeby said that following his own suggestion a regional training and production centre was to be established in Latin America. He thought a chain of such centres should be established throughout the world as funds became available, starting with South America, the Middle East, India, China, and the Pacific. Such a chain of centres would probably do more than anything else, in his opinion, to rid the world of illiteracy.

EDUCATIONAL MISSIONS

SOME of Unesco's most practical achievements last year were accomplished by its educational missions, Dr. Beeby said. Action was taken only if a request was received from the country concerned, and last year there had been three missions—one to the Philippines, one to Siam, and one to Afghanistan. Although the Philippines mission had included two Americans that to Siam had consisted of one Englishman and one Filipino, he said which was a practical example of how an East-West balance was always aimed at.

The mission to Afghanistan demonstrated the international complications Unesco could encounter.

"There you have a country, very largely illiterate, with no university system, and three languages spoken — Pushtu, Persian, and Turki. To complicate matters even further, students who are sent abroad for higher education go to France, Germany, or England, according to the career they want to follow. Thus there are not only three languages to contend with, there is also a people who have been trained according to three educational systems. The mission had to find a solution suitable to all. Half of the cost was paid by Unesco, and half by Afghanistan. The members were chosen by Unesco, each from a country that had made special advances



DR. C. E. BEEBY

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in a particular branch of education. Thus there was a Frenchman to study their secondary education, an Englishman for their technical education, and an American for elementary education."

The mission's report would be submitted to the Afghanistan Government, Dr. Beeby said, which was free to reject any part or all. But since it had gone to considerable expense to get the mission in the first place, that wasn't likely. The mission's work would be supplemented by a stream of clearing-house material from Unesco headquarters, and fellowships would also be made available to Afghanistan students to study abroad, he added.

"Of course we still don't know whether this is the best way to attack a particular country's problems," Dr. Beeby said. "We still don't know all the answers, but we are progressing. Next year there will be sufficient funds for three more missions—probably to Pakistan, which is holding its first democratic election next year with complete adult franchise, and wants to know how to do it; to Burma, which has a very formal academic type of education (not suited to modern conditions) that the Burmese want overhauled; and to the Argentine whose people want to develop their technical education system."

THE WORLD'S NEEDS

UNDER-DEVELOPED countries were not the only ones which could benefit from Unesco, Dr. Beeby continued, and much valuable information about educational needs in different parts of the world was being accumulated.

"We are building up from this a strategic map of the world indicating which countries have made the most advances in the different branches of education, where experts in any particular field can be obtained, and so on," he said.

New Zealand, he had realised from what he had seen of other systems, was one of those countries which had more to give than to receive in education. Our



"A most useful instrument"—The seminar method of conducting a conference shown in operation at Long Island. The American historian James T. Shotwell (right) is here discussing the improvement of history textbooks to remove causes of mistrust and misunderstanding