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An International Newspaper

ONE of the best things now being done by Unesco is its *Courier*, a monthly journal sold throughout the world.* Like all newspapers, it has had its troubles. At first it seemed to suffer from uncertainty of purpose. Nobody quite knew what should be the functions of an international newspaper. Clearly, it should print news; and since it was an official organ the news might have to be confined to the activities of Unesco. This was fair enough in theory, but in practice it became difficult. The work of a United Nations agency is largely administrative. There are strict limits to the interest that can be taken from conferences, seminars, and meetings of experts. And the speeches of high officials, even when delivered with the utmost eloquence, become dull and repetitive when printed too often.

An organisation whose aim is to promote action in the countries of its members will not itself produce exciting stories. But what is behind the conferences and meetings? What are the facts of human experience which lead to so much discussion? These questions began to open a new field in journalism. The ordinary reader does not want to know that resolutions have been passed and reports supplied on certain aspects of education; but he is ready to look at a new school system in Thailand, to be told what children are doing in art, and to hear of an Australian "school of the air" which allows pupils to "answer back" as well as to listen. A recent issue of the *Courier* gave a full report on the social upheaval in the Middle East. And in December of last year the journal's theme was "The World Within

the Atom," an exposition of the peaceful use of atomic energy which could be read with interest and surprise by those who imagine that nuclear research leads only to bigger and better bombs. Much of this, for most of us, is news.

Cable messages do not give the full story of the world today. While hydrogen bombs are being tested and political crises are occurring, much else is happening which never reaches the headlines. A great many people are working to increase the world's knowledge, to uncover little-known areas of the past, to restore half-forgotten languages, to bring the discoveries of scientists into our daily lives. The achievements of these people, reported from a central clearing house for information, can help us to see that life is broader and deeper than some of us had imagined. We begin to feel the creative impulse that everywhere is helping to overcome hunger, disease and ignorance. At a time when so much of the news tempts us to see the world as a potential battlefield, it is salutary to turn to news of an entirely different sort. There is indeed danger and uncertainty today, as always; and the possibilities of destruction have never been greater. But it is equally true that never before has there been so much in the world that is worth preserving. A little of the story is told once a month in Unesco's *Courier*, a journal prepared in the first place for school teachers, but offered also to the general reader. It has begun its seventh year with a new magazine format which makes it easier to read and handle. We hope that more people will discover it, and learn for themselves that good news can cross the frontiers.

*The "Courier" may be obtained in New Zealand from Unesco Publications Centre, 7 Delacy Street, Dunedin, N.E.2 The subscription is 6/- a year.

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 30, 1954.