

Origin of the Federation

THE growth of science and the scientific profession has led to the creation of organizations of scientific workers in many countries. It is a natural result of the increase in the number of scientists, and their concern with the bearing of their work on society and the conditions provided by society for their work.

The war stimulated these developments very greatly. Scientists were brought into the national effort on a new scale of magnitude, and by their achievements acquired a higher status than before, both in government and in public estimation.

In England, the British Association of Scientific Workers grew rapidly, in number and influence, and similar growth occurred in some other countries. These growing associations of scientists in the various countries naturally became interested in each other's problems, which had many common features, and also characteristic differences, reflecting the different circumstances and traditions in their respective countries. The various associations began to correspond with each other, to exchange views and provide mutual advice and strengthen international action in science.

This multilateral correspondence strengthened the various organizations in their requests to their respective governments that they should support the proposal that science should explicitly be given a place in the new United Nations cultural organization.

The inclusion of science in the title, and of sciences divisions in the structure of UNESCO is due in a considerable degree to the spontaneous collaboration of associations of scientific workers in several countries.

The idea of forming a world federation of associations of scientific workers arose independently in several of the national associations. In February, 1946, the British Association of Scientific Workers organized a conference on Science and the Welfare of Mankind. The Chairman at the opening session was Sir Robert Robinson, President of the Royal Society of London, and the first speech was made by the Right Hon. Herbert Morrison, Lord President of the Privy Council. At the final session, Dr. Julian Huxley made his first public speech after his appointment as Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission of UNESCO. Scientific representatives from nine countries attended this conference, and discussions with them disclosed a unanimous desire for creating a world federation of scientific workers. It was agreed that the British Association of Scientific Workers should prepare a draft constitution for a world federation, and should convene a meeting of delegates from the various national associations.

The Inaugural Conference.

The meeting was held in London on July 20th, and 21st, 1946. It was attended by delegates and observers from eighteen associations, representing fourteen countries and the natural sciences division of UNESCO. It was opened by Professor P. M. S. Blackett, President of the British Association of Scientific Workers. He outlined the history of the Association, describing how it had been founded as a trade union in 1918, how it ceased for a time to be a

trade union, and how it resumed this qualification in 1941, during its very rapid expansion at the beginning of the last war.

The Association has two main motives: the improvement of the career of the scientist and technician in every aspect—facilities for training, economic reward, working conditions and status—and the advancement of the use of science for the welfare of humanity. The Association admits scientific workers of all grades from professors to laboratory assistants, and from all branches of science including social science. It differs from the learned societies and professional institutions in its preoccupation with the economic conditions of scientists and with the application of science to society. It has entered the political arena in the pursuit of these aims in a way that those other bodies cannot or will not. The Association is the product of the history of Britain during the last quarter of a century in so far as it has affected scientists. In other countries conditions have been different, and the organization of scientific workers has developed on other lines consonant with the different conditions. But the associations in the various countries, though differing in various ways, have sufficient in common to make a federation possible and effective.

There are many problems on which international discussion and action by scientists is required. For instance, the various national viewpoints on atomic energy require synthesis. This could scarcely be done except by a world federation of scientists. Such a body could promulgate agreed scientific views on the problems of food production, on the repair and rehabilitation of countries ravaged by war, and on the ethical principles which scientists should guide their conduct.

Dr. Joseph Needham, Director of the National Sciences Division of UNESCO, described the aims of his Division. These include co-operation and support for the International Scientific Unions, rehabilitation of scientific activities, provision of laboratories for specialized operations, such as the study of the natural resources of the Hylean Amazon.

His audience were unanimously of the opinion that a world federation of scientific workers would approve such aims, and support of UNESCO by enlisting scientific and public opinion in favour of its scientific policies would be one of the federation's important functions.

The meeting unanimously carried a motion to form the World Federation of Scientific Workers, and proceeded to the consideration of the draft constitution prepared by the British Association of Scientific Workers. After thorough discussion, the Executive Council was given directives for amending the draft and duly completed the following Constitution.