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COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

submitted by the

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ALLIANCE

concerning the Report submitted by UNESCO to the Economic and Social Council on "Teaching Concerning the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies" (item 44 of the Agenda of the 7th Session of the Economic and Social Council).

The UNESCO Report on Teaching Concerning the United Nations has greatly interested the International Cooperative Alliance.

The subject matter seems to us to be of considerable scope. Primarily the intention is to develop international understanding by means of instruction for young persons concerning the United Nations. This is in fact the subject of the huge study to which the Report is devoted: "A Study of Education for International Understanding". Briefly, the aim is to arouse in young persons the feelings which will make the world of to-morrow "a human society", to inculcate a sense of direction necessary for new humans in a new world.

The International Cooperative Alliance, which comprises more than one hundred million families in its affiliated movements, is today the most powerful organization for adult education. It acts not only through its press, schools, films, lectures and libraries, but even more through its thousands of Study Circles, Guilds of Cooperatives and through its tens of thousands of committees, constantly at work in the autonomous management of the economic enterprises for which they are responsible.

In this considerable and continuous effort to create economic democracy, to educate, to produce a complete man, to use the remarkable words in which Albert Thomas described the cooperative movement, the International Cooperative Alliance has daily opportunities

of discovering the shortcomings of endeavours to influence adults because they come too late, and how necessary it is to influence youth itself.

That is why we welcome the activity begun by UNESCO and wish here to emphasize its immense importance.

In the document in question we were particularly struck by the section dealing with the means of teaching about the United Nations, and by the difficulty, pointed out by nearly all the Governments consulted, that it is hardly possible to give such teaching to young persons under fourteen, fifteen or even sixteen years of age. But by that age, the personality has already been largely moulded, its reactions to circumstances and people are more or less settled.

That is why we think it necessary to draw attention to the following point. Along with the addition of a new subject to the curriculum - that dealing with the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies - the reform of the actual methods used in the instruction of young persons seems to us of major importance.

The methods to which we refer are team-work, self-government and school co-operation. Very accurate descriptions of their application and results are in existence. We shall restrict ourselves to mentioning three publications. Two were published by the International Bureau of Education under the general Editorship of Professor Piaget. They deal with le Travail par équipe à l'école (Teamwork in schools), and le Self-government à l'école (Self-government in Schools). The third is by Mr. Maurice Colombain, head of the Cooperation Department at the International Labour Organization and deals with The Educational Value of School Co-operatives.

We must emphasize that these methods may be applied to children as soon as they reach school age, and that they would provide a powerful impulse in the desired direction, whilst meeting some of the reservations and objections made by Governments on the occasion of the Study. They also avoid all the lack of efficiency of oral teaching in dealing with young persons. The child prepares to become a co-operator in the world of tomorrow by his own active efforts. These methods are eminently suited to developing in the young generation the need and habit of understanding others. In a word, they tend to create the intellectual and moral condition needed by the world of tomorrow, if we wish it to be harmonious and pacific.

The International Cooperative Alliance has taken the liberty of bringing this point to the attention of the Economic and Social Council out of the conviction that the conditions for a peaceful economy cannot be created solely by the reform of regulations and institutions. To know how the man of tomorrow will be born is so vital that we believe that the methods of the new school should not only be recommended by UNESCO and by specialists in the science of education, but that they will have a much wider influence if they are brought to the attention of educationalists and the public by the experts in political and social sciences present at this distinguished assembly.