

THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ACADEMIES AND THE AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES DEVOTED TO HUMANISTIC STUDIES¹

One of the best traditions which have come down to us from the Middle Ages is that of the republic of letters, of the interdependence of learned men and students of all nations, of the free share in the results of research and thought across political boundaries. Whatever be the fate of the effort to establish closer relations among governments, the old bonds among scholars will not be loosened; already there has been a definite response to the need for organized effort in the field of humanistic learning.

Before the war the International Association of Academies, of which the United States was not a member, formed in 1900, met the need for organized coöperation among scholars; but its activities came to an end with the breaking out of the conflict which involved so many of its members. Out of the war has come a new international scientific organization, the International Research Council, formed in 1918, at the call of the Academy of Sciences in Paris. The research councils created in each belligerent state to mobilize scientific thought for war purposes were thus united for mutual help, and after the armistice, the international council, no longer an engine of war, was opened to the scientific academies of the neutral countries. It now holds regular meetings, where the scientists of member countries meet for common study of the questions which interest them all.

The initiative for the formation of a similar organ among those interested in humanistic studies came also from Paris. The Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres and the Academy of Moral and Political Science called a conference at Paris in May, 1919, at which was formed the Union Academique Internationale (International Union of Academies). Its organization was completed and a constitution adopted at a second meeting of authorized delegates, held also in Paris, in October, 1919, at which eleven countries were represented. The second regular meeting was held in May, 1920. So the new organization is now well established as a focal point for humanistic scholars of the world. The objects of the union were expressed in the first call as follows:

(1) "To establish, maintain, and strengthen among the scholars of the allied and associated states corporate and individual relations which

¹ The constitution of the American Council of Learned Societies was ratified by the American Political Science Association in March, 1920.

shall be sustained, cordial, and efficacious, and which shall, by means of regular correspondence and exchange of communications and by the periodical holding of scientific congresses, make for the advancement of knowledge in the various fields of learning.

(2) "To inaugurate, encourage, or direct those works of research and publication which shall be deemed most useful to the advancement of science and most to require and deserve collective effort."

The constitution as adopted at the October meeting established as the governing body of the union a committee of two delegates from each country, who should hold at least one meeting a year. The committee elects the officers of the union to manage its affairs in the period between sessions, and to supervise the permanent secretariat established at Brussels, the headquarters of the union. New members may be admitted by a three-fourths vote of the delegates, and it is to be hoped that German and Austrian scholarship will soon be represented on the committee. The administrative expenses of the union are met by an equal assessment on its members, which at present amounts to 2000 francs (Belgian) each; but the funds to carry out projects of work are to be raised by the members.

The function of the union is to give these projects the guaranty of careful consideration by a responsible international group of scholars, who will pass not only on the value of the work, but upon the possibilities of its being carried out. The procedure is planned to allow careful consideration. Projects must be submitted to the member societies or academies before being brought up at a meeting of the committee, so that each local body can decide which are of greater interest from its point of view and which it can aid in carrying out, either by providing personnel to do the work, or by securing the necessary financial support. The delegates bring to their committee meeting the opinions of their local groups as to local wishes and possibilities and can select, as a result of the world-wide referendum they represent, those plans for research or publication which not only will be most valuable in their scholarly results, but will also most readily command financial support or for which qualified workers can be best found.

Eleven academies representing humanistic learning or the humanistic side of general academies have joined the union: France, Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Italy, Greece, Poland, Russia, and Japan. The academy of Sweden "will be glad to join the union when it is possible to invite all the countries to participate in it;" that is, it will join with the German and Austrian academies.

The United States was represented at the first meeting by Professor Charles H. Haskins of Harvard and Professor James T. Shotwell of Columbia, and the coöperation of America was not only desired by the Europeans, but was felt to be a duty, as well as a privilege, by the American scholars to whom the call was communicated. A serious difficulty arose in the United States. There was no legally recognized body of scholars representing the humanistic studies, and corresponding to the academies of European countries. A similar situation arose in Great Britain in 1902, when the scientific men were represented in the International Association of Academies through the Royal Society; but there was no means of getting representation for the other branches of learning. Consequently, the British Academy for the Promotion of Historical, Philosophical, and Philological Studies, usually termed the British Academy, was formed to meet the need, and is now a member of the Union Academique Internationale.

In this country, although there is no national academy, there are active societies in each field of humanistic study—societies, many of them, with a long record of useful work and an acquired right to consideration. Appreciating the actual situation, a peculiarly American device was hit upon to set up a body which could represent this country in the union. Instead of endeavoring to establish an academy composed of a comparatively few men, whose choice would have seemed arbitrary to many of those left out, a federation of the existing societies was effected, and the American Council of Learned Societies devoted to Humanistic Studies, termed for short the American Council, was formed in Boston in September, 1919. Great credit is due Mr. Waldo G. Leland, secretary of the American Historical Association, whose ability and enthusiasm are largely responsible for the successful outcome of the September meeting.

The council is composed of two delegates from each constituent society, who meet at least annually. It elects its own officers and appoints and instructs the American representatives in the international union. Its current expense and the annual assessment paid to the union are covered by a small sum assessed on each member society in proportion to membership. The Institute of International Education, through its director, Dr. Duggan, has generously assumed the clerical expense of the council and has provided it with office accommodations.

The first meeting of the council was held on February 14, 1920, in the rooms of the institute in New York. Eleven societies sent dele-

gates: the American Philosophical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Antiquarian Society, the American Philological Association, the Archaeological Institute of America, the American Historical Association, the American Economic Association, the American Political Science Association, the American Sociological Society, the American Oriental Society, and the Modern Language Association of America. All these societies are now members of the council. The American Philosophical Association and the Society of International Law were invited to join; the first has postponed discussion until its next meeting, the second decided not to join.

The American Political Science Association was represented by Professor Henry Jones Ford, of Princeton, and Mr. J. P. Chamberlain, of Columbia University. The council elected as its first officers, Professor Charles H. Haskins, of Harvard, chairman; Professor John C. Rolfe, of the University of Pennsylvania, vice-chairman; Professor George M. Whicher, of Hunter College, secretary. These three, and Professor Allen A. Young, of Cornell, and Professor Hiram Bingham, of Yale, constitute the executive committee. Professor James T. Shotwell, of Columbia University, and Mr. William H. Buckler, of Baltimore, were appointed delegates to the May meeting of the international union.

American membership in this union is thus based on recognition of the existing American societies, which include practically all students of subjects coming under the jurisdiction of the international body. The members of the council are not a self-continuing body of scholars more or less arbitrarily selected, but are chosen by the suffrage of their peers in the fields which they represent. This democratic organization has the double advantage of corresponding to our American theory of representation and of resting the support for the international movement on the wide basis of the ten thousand members of the constituent societies, rather than on the forty or one hundred immortals who would constitute an academy.

The moral and social value of the expression of the international solidarity of learning contained in the union needs no argument. The League of Nations is now in being and it is fitting that the international democracy of learning should have an organ through which it can express its desires to the council of the league and can aid that body in settling questions which interest the scholars of the world. Already an international committee of archaeologists has framed regulations in respect to excavations in the territory of the former Turkish Empire,

regulations which will probably be attached to the treaty with Turkey and will be applied by the mandatories who will hold portions of that territory. Under the Ottoman régime, permits to excavate in that archaeological golconda were obtained through national or personal influence, a condition which seriously hampered effective work and caused much resentment. The existence of an active international organ of scholars will be a safeguard against breaches of the regulations, once they are adopted.

Such work, however, is only a small part of the field. Students of political science will be especially interested in the possibilities of joint action in urging governments to a more liberal policy in opening their archives to study; in standardizing reports, especially in respect to labor laws, where the international right of inquiry as to the enforcement of international labor treaties will tend to this end; in securing coöperation in studies of government activities such as budget systems, parliamentary committee systems, in regard to which general information is so abundant, exact knowledge so rare and so hard to acquire, without the coöperation of local students and administrators. When the world was essentially agricultural, problems of political science might have been considered largely local. Now that the world is becoming industrialized, and on a machine basis, even as to farming, problems are increasingly international in scope, as the international regulation by treaty of labor and migratory birds shows, and in the methods applied by local laws in settling them, witness the world-wide spread of workmen's compensation and other forms of social insurance.

Teachers and students of political science recognize the operation of the law of imitation in legislation; they protest only against blind acceptance of foreign institutions or ostrich-like refusal to accept them on the report of more or less biased observance. The international union offers the means of extending and strengthening the work of such groups as the International Association for Labor Legislation and the International Association against Unemployment, and therefore of rendering a great service, not only to international good feeling and learning, but to practical understanding of governmental and legal institutions as they really exist.

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