

MASS INFORMATION

One of the activities of the International Children's Center should be directed toward education, that is, it should be organized under the suggestions and conducted in accordance with the directives of UNESCO, which, we must bear in mind, is the specialized agency of the United Nations for education, as well as for science and culture.

The problem of the education of expectant mothers is a matter of serious concern to social workers in all countries. This problem is, in fact, a very complex one, because it concerns, on the one hand, the education of girls in the secondary schools (high schools) and, on the other hand, the education of expectant mothers during the time when they are awaiting the birth of a child. Needless to say, these problems could not be solved in the same way in the various countries, and great differences immediately appear according to the country, differences which have to do, at the same time, with the educational standards and methods in use, both in the family and in the educational institutions, and with the general diffusion of knowledge. It is, therefore, a problem which concerns educators, parents, especially the mothers, and public opinion in general (mass information). Some countries are primarily concerned with problems of Public Health. Others with moral welfare. A comparison of different methods, policies and their implementation in the principal countries of the world is of major importance and it would appear to be of very great value to organize a system of exchange of information in this connection, in order that each country may profit by the experience of the others. These problems are of constant concern to the Staff of UNESCO, and they have already indicated certain suggestions in regard to the work to be organized under their auspices at the future International Children's Center. These suggestions have to do with the teaching of home-making and family relations (or domestic science) in elementary and secondary schools, pamphlets, booklets or other printed matters intended for expectant mothers and for young mothers who attend clinic consultations and dispensaries, the distribution of information covering progress in child care, and attitudes toward children. This educational task must reach all groups of young girls in general and working girl groups (factory workers, employees, etc.). It is a task which concerns educators, welfare workers, social workers, even women work supervisors, and inspectors, and factory doctors, much more than it does the health authorities themselves.

This teaching problem really involves two distinct trends: first, general education in everything concerning the normal child - and in this connection it must be added that we are concerned not only with the newly born or nursing child, but also with the older child - and second, informing the parents in regard to progress made, both in new preventive or curative methods and in the field of new methods of instruction. This is one of the fields in which UNESCO could make use of its cooperation with the International Children's Center. This whole task must be accomplished with a great deal of skill and good judgment, for any kind of standardization must be avoided at all costs.

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and, on the contrary, an intelligent adaptation of general policies to national tendencies and customs must be effected.

To this task of the International Children's Center must be added the more general task of mass information. We have already referred to this in connection with activities and methods. This is, in fact, one of the most important aspects, as it involves an evaluation of the various means of reaching the masses by favourable methods, among which the press and the radio are, of course, the most outstanding. But we must insist upon another factor. Most of the agencies of mass information give out very complete information on economic and social problems which concern, on the whole, the adult part of the population. It is worthy of note to observe that the problems of children are most often neglected. Public opinion in the mass, in the different countries in general, is badly informed on demographic problems, number and rate of birth, the difficulties brought about by deficient, abnormal, delinquent or abandoned children, etc. From time to time, sensational articles appear in the newspapers about children's crimes or about the demoralizing effect of certain motion picture films, but no serious information reaches public opinion. We feel that it is the job of the specialized organizations of the United Nations to supply to the masses of the population of the various countries good, controlled, intelligible information which will, little by little, facilitate in each country campaigns leading to real progress. This information will lead in a general way, and as a general objective, to a new effort of organized help for children who are in need of it, an effort which can be undertaken on the international plane as well as on a national plane. In countries whose economic situation is difficult, the help available from more favoured countries will be facilitated in this way for the purpose of improving the nutrition and the instruction of the masses of neglected or unfortunate children. All countries will be in a position to derive benefit from the instruction diffused among their population on proven methods to decrease criminality or to teach deficient children. This mass information will derive its material from the Information Center, to which we will refer below, and will have available means provided by UNESCO for the wide-spread dissemination of reliable information.

An effort of this kind will help to put into effect, or more exactly speaking, to perpetuate the effort begun by the United Nations toward a movement of general care and assistance for the world's children.

INFORMATION CENTER -

A number of Information Centers exist in various countries on children's problems. Statistics on disease and mortality can be obtained without difficulty. It is possible to obtain definite information concerning, for example (we mention these facts merely to illustrate what we have in mind), living conditions of children in Tunisia, or the efforts being made in behalf of homeless children in Italy, or the attempt made toward a survey of child delinquency in Portugal.

But how valuable it would be to have a center at which the information supplied on these questions by the various national and international organizations would be carefully collected, classified, and then made use of, put to advantage and developed. These problems have to do with the psychology and the ethics of family life among peoples of very different races, living under the most diversified climatic conditions, and could therefore be of value to the various psycho-pedagogical institutions and to institutions created for the study of peoples in countries having a civilization different from the European civilization. A liaison which does not now exist would also be established in this way between these various services of information. This work would illuminate the cold figures supplied by health statistics and would make it possible to use them in behalf of progress. Their dissemination for the information of the masses, as mentioned above, would be of value to the efforts of private agencies and of international organizations.

EXHIBITS AND DISPLAYS

A Center of this kind should by no means be allowed to become exclusively an instrument of work for a small number of men, however useful that part of its task might be. The people itself of the various countries must participate in the Center. It would be necessary for that purpose to organize exhibitions of a very special kind ; some of them, set up at the Center itself, to be repeated and changed successively during the year, would show the work done in behalf of children in the various countries of the world, showing the originality of method and the progress effected by each nation ; others would be mobile exhibitions which would travel, in some way, throughout the world in order to disseminate ideas and demonstrate the most interesting accomplishments, by means of pictures, talking displays, photographs, and motion picture films. These exhibitions would disseminate the work accomplished by each nation and by the efforts of the various organisms of the United Nations.