

COMMERCE DEGREES.

LONDON UNIVERSITY SCHEME.

A private conference was held on Friday at the University of London, South Kensington, when Dr. Russell Wells, Chairman of the General Committee for Degrees in Commerce, explained the scheme for those degrees which are about to be established by the University.

The University, he said, wanted to take its share in the great reconstruction that was coming about because of the war. Commerce was a very important factor in that reconstruction. The wealth of this country and its future depended upon commerce, and looking at it from a wide standpoint they were impressed by our deficiency in commercial education compared with that of Germany and the United States. There were curious deficiencies in our educational system. A certain well-known business man told him that after the war he did not know how he was going to obtain suitable representatives, and he thought that he should have to revert to Germans again. The average Englishman learned languages with difficulty, and adopted the attitude that if he could make himself understood in a business deal that was all that was required. What was really wanted was that our business men should understand the habits of mind of the people with whom they were dealing.

BUSINESS MEN'S COOPERATION.

If the scheme for degrees in commerce was to be a success they must marry the City and the University, and they had been very fortunate in getting in touch with various leaders of thought and business in the City of London and securing their hearty cooperation. Mr. Balfour had emphasized at the Mansion House the point that they must not make their men so highly trained from an academic point of view that they would be practically useless in commerce. They were bearing that in mind and taking steps to avoid it, but on the other hand they must take care not to make their men merely superior technical clerks.

They had formed an influential committee, which had been subdivided into small committees for various subjects. For example, they had sub-committees dealing with Australian Trade, Banking, Distributing Trades, Eastern Trade, Engineering, Non-ferrous Metals, Printing, Publishing, and Newspaper Trades, Shipping and Marine Insurance, and Inland Transport. Each of these committees had an able chairman and had already done good work. The University Professors and teachers prepared a skeleton syllabus and submitted it to the committee, which had improved it, the various sub-committees had sent up reports which were collated and a scheme for higher commercial education was elaborated. That scheme was put before a meeting of business men, who had adopted it, with slight emendations, and finally it had been approved by the Senate of the University.

There were to be two degrees; first that of Bachelor of Commerce, which would correspond to the same degree in the other faculties, and secondly, there would be the degree of Master of Commerce. The examinations would be certainly no easier than those in Science and Art. The salient idea was that a modern language was to go right through—not taught as in academic circles, but taught as a practical instrument. Among the languages would be Polish, Czech, Rumanian, modern Greek, and the great Eastern languages, Hindustani, Chinese, and the like.

In the first year all students would take practically the same course and the subjects would be the fundamental basis of the degree. The compulsory subjects would be Elements of Economics, Banking, Currency, Trade (including Transport), and Finance; Geography, with special attention to the geography of products and communications and to the distribution of Industries and Trade; and an approved modern foreign language.

Banking students would take World History, with special reference to the 19th century, and other students would take Accounting, as applied to traders and trading companies. There would also be one optional subject. In the second year the compulsory subjects would be common to all, and at the end of that year the student could take the first part of his Final Examination for the Bachelor's Degree. His third year would be spent in preparation for the second part of Final Examination, and in this year his studies were specialized. He might take Banking and Finance; Shipping; Inland Transport, or some special or regional branch of Trade.

THE MASTER OF COMMERCE DEGREE.

After taking his Bachelor's Degree he could proceed to the degree of Master of Commerce. For this two years' practical commercial experience was required. Work in a merchant's office would be equivalent to the ward work of a physician or time spent in the laboratory.

In answer to questions Dr. Wells said that there would be no "approved" offices and that a City editor's office would be equivalent to a merchant's office.

Continuing, Dr. Wells said the University of London was unique; it was the one University that was able to carry out a scheme like that. Merchants thought that youths should get into the office as soon as possible; a man of 23 was too old to start on the bottom rung of the ladder. With the external system of the University they were not bound to take a man from any recognized college. Students could work at home, and evening classes would be provided. Any man, who was determined, could take the degree. They intended to have in London the greatest faculty of Commerce in the world; there would be scholarships (some tenable abroad), and a bureau would be created to help students to study by themselves by giving them advice and directing their reading.

£500,000 REQUIRED.

Half a million of money would be required for all the objects he had enumerated. The Cassel Trustees had promised them £150,000 if they raised a like sum by September. Towards this £60,000 had already been subscribed. There were several reasons why the University of London alone could carry out the scheme. One was its situation, contiguous to the City; another was its peculiar constitution, which enabled it to cater for the man working by himself. If the scheme was a success in London, he had not the slightest doubt that it would leaven every other University in the country. Several City men were willing to find vacancies for their graduates every year, and to start them at £300 per annum. The scheme was now ripe, and would come into operation on October 1. The only matter in suspension was the question of a Doctorate of Commerce, which would follow the degrees of Bachelor and Master. A Commerce Degrees Committee had been appointed by the Senate, and would include 10 members of the University and 20 business men. Several leaders of the Government were behind them, and supporting them.

Sir Herbert Morgan, Vice-chairman of the Printing, Publishing, and Newspaper Trades Sub-Committee, said that the business community would give the proposal a very hearty welcome. He believed that it would strike the death-knell of the so-called hard-headed business man. The present difficulties with labour might have been foreseen if the men responsible for commerce had had a broader and more liberal education. The University had magnificently come to the rescue of the business world, which must do its part.