

Natural Sciences

Detailed discussions on the programme in the Natural Sciences were carried on mainly in working parties so that the Programme Commission was able to decide expeditiously on many of the items.

Every delegation seemed to be enthusiastic over the proposed establishment of an International Commission on Oceanography. There were mixed views, however, as to whether a proposal by the Executive Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization for joint FAO-Unesco sponsorship of a policy committee on oceanography should be pursued. Several delegations went so far as to suggest that the commission should be co-sponsored by FAO, WHO, IAEA and Unesco. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that the General Conference should refer the matter to the Executive Board together with the comments made by various delegations, including reference to the role of the Sub-Committee on Oceanography of the United Nations Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC). Reservations were voiced by a number of delegations that if, following a study to be made in 1961, the new International Commission should recommend that Unesco operate an international research and training vessel, it should begin such operations in 1962. The Canadian delegation expressed the view that any such recommendation by the Commission should be examined by the General Conference since it is likely to involve an expenditure in the vicinity of half a million dollars a year. The view was shared by the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand delegations. The discussion concluded with a proposal that the recommendations of the International Commission be sent first to the Executive Board prior to submission to the twelfth session in 1962 and that the \$90,000 provided in the budget in case the Commission recommended the operation of a small international ship should be directed immediately to other forms of training oceanographers.

The conference decided in principle that the programme of Scientific Research on Arid Lands should not be continued as a major project after 1962. However, it was recommended that expenditures not exceeding 70 percent of the present level would be continued for some years, regardless of the limited area where the work is now being done. The Middle East and Southeast Asian countries were particularly anxious that Unesco should continue its efforts in this field of activity. Most member states felt that the work done so far had been of considerable value in increasing the production of food for some regions, and therefore that, as a scientific project, and one consistent with the aims of Unesco, it merited further support. Although not a member of the working party on this project, the Canadian delegation was in agreement with its recommendations.

In considering the survey of the main trends of inquiry in the field of the natural sciences, the conference had before it a basic document dealing with the ten recommendations of the Auger Report which had been prepared by Professor Pierre Auger as the result of a decision taken at the tenth session when the General Conference accepted the request of the Secretary-General of the United Nations that Unesco prepare a report on this subject. The recommendations contained in the report were used by the Director of the Department of Natural Sciences to formulate a ten-year programme for his Department which the conference approved and which, in the view of our delegation, is sound and is consistent