

Location of the Third General Conference

The Executive Board recommended to the General Conference, "That, in view of the urgent need to economize resources and to avoid interruption of the work of the Organization, the third session should be held at the Headquarters of the Organization in Paris, France."

Nevertheless, the leader of the Lebanese delegation warmly pressed an invitation to hold the 1948 Conference in Beirut. He promised the best possible technical facilities, and proved to the satisfaction of most delegates that, owing to the lower cost of living, it would be more economical to send delegations to Beirut than to Paris. Above all, he pleaded for the stimulation and understanding that a UNESCO Conference in Lebanon would bring to educators, scientists, scholars, and artists of the whole Arab world. He was strongly supported by the delegates of France, Egypt, India, South Africa, and many Latin-American countries. Delegates who, while expressing appreciation of the generous invitation given, yet spoke equally strongly in favour of Paris as the site of the Conference, included those of the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia, and New Zealand. The heavy cost was stressed of shifting a proportion of the Secretariat from Paris to Beirut, and the New Zealand delegate said that, quite apart from financial considerations, he must reluctantly oppose the Beirut proposal because of its interference with the work of the Secretariat during a most crucial year, when every minute and every ounce of energy would be needed to carry out the programme. The Director-General estimated that the holding of the Conference in Beirut would mean a 10 per cent. loss of time and energy.

The voting was 20 to 10 in favour of the Beirut amendment. Before the substantive vote was taken, the leader of the Canadian delegation, who had voted against Beirut, suggested that, in view of the feeling of the meeting, the invitation of the Lebanese delegate be accepted unanimously. This was done.

Although New Zealand opposed the Beirut proposal, and, indeed, had, the year before, opposed the holding of the 1947 Conference in Mexico on grounds of expense and loss of efficiency, it was impossible for us to ignore the fact that the cultural life of Latin-America had been quickened and enriched by the choice of Mexico as the site for the Conference. Senor Manuel Gual Vidal told us that six months before the Conference only a few intellectuals and officials knew what "UNESCO" stood for. Yet before the Conference was over all the people we met—teachers, clerks, taxi-drivers, waiters, shop-assistants, school-children, and peasants in remote villages—were, within the limits of their understanding, aware of the significance of UNESCO, and had a faith in the Organization