

- Diplomas awarded by colleges the world over could have some significance if given some standard of equivalence.

## EQUIVALENCE IN ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

If there is one sphere in which there should be no national rivalries it is that of education, and yet it must be said that it is here that one often finds the most unprogressive nationalism. Many states are convinced that their university system is the best; hence their reluctance to recognize the diplomas of others. But besides these poor reasons there are more valid ones which make the problem hard to solve. Studies in preparation for a definite profession are organized as part of a whole; they are adapted to local needs. One country puts the emphasis on one subject rather than another; one country attaches more importance to practical work while its neighbor conceives studies in a more theoretical light. Finally, some studies can only be appropriate to a particular country — law, for example.

The “European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas Leading to Admission to Universities” was signed in Paris in 1953. According to Article 1, paragraph 1, each contracting party recognises the others’ university entrance qualifications. However, Article 1, paragraph 3, shows clear signs of the nationalism alluded to above. It provides that each contracting party shall reserve the right not to apply the provision contained in paragraph 1 to its own nationals. A second Convention was signed in Paris in 1956, again under the auspices of the Council of Europe: the European Convention on the Equivalence of periods of University Study.

This Convention has a much more limited scope than its title suggests. According to Article 1, the con-

tracting States agree to recognise any period of studies passed in the university of another Member State of the Council of Europe, but only in the field of modern languages. It must also be added that only the period of studies is recognised, and not the examinations. In 1962 this Convention only received nine ratifications. In 1959 the Council of Europe was to take a step forward in the equivalence of diplomas when, under its auspices, the European Convention on the Academic Recognition of University Qualifications was signed in Paris by the majority of Member States. It provides that the contracting parties shall grant academic recognition to university qualifications bestowed by a university established in the territory of another contracting party. This recognition is to permit the holder to pursue supplementary university studies and to hold the academic qualification. Does this include the possibility of practising the profession to which a qualification applies? The Convention is not very clear on this point. It ap-

pears that the solution should be sought above all by competent university bodies rather than at full governmental level.

Some countries have made efforts to solve the question by bilateral agreement, on a subject by subject basis. Thus conferences were held in 1960, 1961, 1962 and in January 1963 by heads of French and German universities. Their efforts were directed more towards the recognition of periods of study completed abroad than towards the full recognition of the equivalence of diplomas. As regards subjects, they covered chemistry, classical philology, Romance philology and Germanic studies.

To take languages alone, the conference of French and German heads of universities met with considerable difficulties arising out of the different methods of organising studies in the two countries. In France studies work towards a licenciate's degree and a doctorate. Examinations are held each year. Germany only knows the doctorate, for which the examinations tend to be grouped together at the end of the

period of studies. Furthermore, the German student has more freedom than the French in the choice of syllabus, and seminars or practical work play a considerable role in Germany, while in France they are practically non-existent. Consequently, in France, attendance at such courses is not compulsory, while in Germany it is controlled and absences are punished.

The conference of heads of universities made a very thorough comparative study to see what in the French syllabus could be made to correspond to the German syllabus. The result is that their plan, now completed and awaiting the approval of the government authorities, proposes a whole series of partial equivalences. In seeking equivalence in subject matter the conference of heads of universities has done useful work. Similarly it may be noted that, as part of the studies on this question made by the European Economic Community, a

Committee has examined the problem of equivalence in pharmacy and has made a painstaking comparison not only of the number of years of study but also the *number of hours* devoted to each subject. Each member was requested to furnish details of every subject taught and to submit examples of questions set in examinations.

This system has definite advantages. By comparing subject matter for study in two countries, one arrives at real equivalences and avoids anything artificial.

Thus, while the attempts have been relatively numerous, the results to date are disappointing. Yet the equivalence of diplomas in Europe will become increasingly necessary.

Provided that countries want it, the provision of a system of equivalence in European university diplomas is not an insurmountable task. If nationalism were abandoned in the sphere of education, it would facilitate the association or unity of

Europe as an element of peace and stability in the international community as a whole.—*Dr. Philippe Cahier, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva. An abstract.*

### NICE PERSON

A nice person is neither too tall nor too short, looks clean and cheerful, has no prominent feature, makes no difficulties, is never misplaced, is never foolishly affronted, and is void of affectation.

There is something in the very air of a nice person which inspires you with confidence, makes you talk, and talk without fear of malicious misrepresentation.

A nice person is clear of little, trumpery passions, acknowledges superiority, delights in talent, shelters humility, pardons adversity, forgives deficiency, respects all men's rights, never stops the bottle, is never long and never wrong, always knows the day of the month, the name of everybody at table, and never gives pain to any human being. A nice person never knocks over wine or melted butter, does not tread upon the dog's foot, or molest the family cat, eats soup without noise, laughs in the right place, and has a watchful and attentive eye. — *Sydney Smith*