

## WORLD CONFERENCE OF UNIVERSITIES

One of the most important conferences on higher education took place in Tokyo from August 30 to September 6 this year. It was the quinquennial meeting of the International Association of Universities. The meeting preceding it was held in Mexico City in 1960.

About 400 universities and institutions of higher learning from all parts of the world participated in the Tokyo conference. Seven Philippine institutions were officially represented. They were the University of Santo Tomas, University of the East, Centro Escolar de Señoritas University, Philippine Women's University, National University and Foundation College of Dumaguete, these being full members of the IAU.

The International Association of Universities is not sponsored by any government

or state. So universities from all parts of the world, public and private, free communist, and neutral, sectarian and non-sectarian, are represented without distinction. Political subjects are not included in the agenda at any meeting. The sole requirement for membership is that an institution should maintain satisfactory standard of instruction. And in this connection, the directorate has decided that admission of new members will henceforth be stricter than in the first years of the Association's life, some twelve or fifteen years ago.

In the Tokyo conference the general subjects in the agenda which were discussed by the representatives were three in number, namely: Access to Higher Education, University Autonomy, and Contribution to Higher Edu-

cation to Economic and Cultural Development.

To enable the entire conference to consider the different points or phases of each subject, three separate working groups, which were smaller groups or committees of about 20 members each, were organized. The procedure followed was: first, a plenary session was held on each subject; and this was succeeded by a close-door session of the working group or committee assigned to consider the points raised during the plenary session and to summarize them. Another meeting of the working committee was held the day following to which any member or representative of any member institution could go and take part in the discussion of different points brought together in the first meeting of the committee. In this session any member may question any point presented before or add any new idea pertinent to the general subject. After this the rapporteur makes a summary of the various points which received group approval. In the general

and final plenary session, the 3 working committees presented their summaries. The President of the Association then submitted them to the entire conference for final approval or modification. This was the concluding part of the program of the conference.

On the last day the election of the President for the following five years took place. Dr. Zurhaik, well-known professor of history of the American University of Beirut and former university rector, was unanimously elected to the post. He succeeds Dr. F. Cyril James, the retiring President, a former professor of economics of the University of Pennsylvania and former President of McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

One cannot help but admire the ability, dignity, and poise of Dr. Cyril James. His speeches were models of clearness in thought and in the logical presentation of pertinent ideas, without circumlocution nor pompous appeal to emotion. His delivery was deliberate and pleasantly measured. Every

word and phrase were distinctively expressed, every sentence left no doubt in the hearer's mind about its intended purpose. Vivid pictures and scholarly expressions all clothed in language of simplicity, made Dr. James addresses, which were never tedious and long, something which served to enlighten the minds of the representatives at the conference on the significance of the role of universities in the present-day world.

The delegates were largely university presidents, rectors, and vice-chancellors of institutions in European, British, North American, South and Central American, African, Asian, and Australian countries. Ancient universities, such as Paris, Oxford, Heidelberg, Cambridge, Milan, Salamanca, Cordova, and more modern ones, such as Harvard, Yale, Michigan, California, Moscow, Berlin, to mention but a few, were all represented.

Meeting famous scholars, scientists, academic executives, all with long and rich experience in the pursuit of education and learning, is a

distinct privilege for all who appreciate the intellectual life. One cannot help but notice the gulf of difference between such event, on one hand, and a convention of politicians, on the other, in which no more than pompous and futuous addresses and comments fill the hall in boresome repetition. This second group attempts to believe that it could solve problems with hasty and superficial solutions. The first realizes the difficulties of the problems it discusses and proposes no more than suggestions for needed action which may fit certain conditions, with full awareness of the complexity created by rapid changes taking place in the present fields of scholarship, education, technology, and science.

The Tokyo conference of the IAU was of special significance to the emerging nations or the less developed communities in the world today. For in addition to the discussion of the subjects common to all institutions of higher education everywhere, the conference gave particular attention to the

role of higher education in the development of the economic, social, and cultural conditions of the new nations today.

The Japanese managers of the conference deserve full praise for the orderly way the sessions were conducted, the excellent reception of the delegates, and the perfect smoothness with which the activities were carried out. Japanese hospitality was unsurpassed.

Finally, one could not help but notice the relatively minor attention given to the matter of the election of the succeeding officials of the Association. There were 28 posts in two administrative bodies to be chosen, but only 24 nominations were submitted by the members or delegates. Consequently, the outgoing executive committee on elections had to designate 4 more candidates in order to fill all the 28 posts. What

a contrast this presented to what happens in Philippine elections where for one vacant post there are always ten or more candidates fighting noisily for it. The explanation is simple: the members obviously went to the conference chiefly to participate in the discussion of the subjects rather than to concern themselves with the election of officers. The inexperienced university head who went there to get himself elected to a high post must have come out badly disillusioned.

Membership in the International Association of Universities is surely a mark of distinction and a high privilege for the university or college who acquires it; and attendance in its quinquennial conference can prove a stimulating experience to heads and professors of institutions of learning who are able to take part in its discussions. — *Foundation Time*.