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Cont
February 1949

PROJECT MEMORANDUM

AMERICAN-CHINESE COMMITTEE
of the
MASS EDUCATION MOVEMENT, INC.

FISCAL YEAR ENDS: Not a consideration.

REQUEST: None outstanding.

<u>PREVIOUS INTEREST:</u>	<u>1929</u>	<u>1948</u>
Mr. JDR, Jr.	\$100,000	\$
NAR		3,400
LSR		6,987
		<u>\$10,387</u>

Note: The Rockefeller Foundation gave substantially and steadily to this movement from the beginning until the Foundation liquidated its China Program in 1945 - between 1925 and 1945 at the rate of about \$24,000 a year.

ORIGIN AND HISTORY: To virtually all effects the history of this Movement coincides and is synonymous with the career of Dr. Y.C. James ("Jimmy") Yen, Yale '18, Secretary of the Movement's American-Chinese Committee. Its earliest beginning was in about 1919 when Jimmy Yen as an army YMCA worker in France, writing letters for the coolies of a military labor battalion there, hit upon "Basic English", an ingenious selection of about 1000 characters most commonly known to plain people, out of more than 40,000 available characters. Possible for coolies and peasants to learn in 96 hours from four small books, this system brought on an educational revolution which was to lead to 46 million Chinese learning to read and write who otherwise might have remained illiterate. The idea grew. Back in China at Pai-hua, Yen set out to create a plain people's literature and from that, by a spread to many centers, to teach public health, improved economic ways and civics, in addition to reading and writing.

By 1925 the movement had reached all leading cities of China and many rural areas. The National Association for the Advancement of Mass Education as then known was formed, with Yen as general secretary, and with the stated purposes of (1) soliciting contributions for the promotion and advancement of the mass education and social reconstruction of the Chinese in China and in the United States and its dependencies, (2) conducting research and training in the education, health and economy of those people, (3) using funds to improve their general welfare and to assist non-profit organizations in China and in the United States having similar purposes.

One strikingly successful experiment was the transformation of a mud village (Ting H'sien) into a laboratory of mass education and social reconstruction.

CHINESE MASS EDUCATION MOVEMENT

Eighty-five per cent of China's 450 million people are rural. Fundamentally therefore national reconstruction for China means rural reconstruction. And the most pressing need in rural reconstruction is trained leadership. In 1940 the Mass Education Movement established a College of Rural Reconstruction 70 miles

DR. YEN AND THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION, NAR, LSR

The Rockefeller Foundation terminated its grants to the Mass Education Movement in 1945 in connection with the liquidation of the RF's China Program. In April 1948, at about the time of the passage of the China Aid Act, Yen presented a \$545,000 budget for RF consideration:

Central Administration	\$ 50,000
College of Rural Reconstruction	165,000
West China Experiment Station	130,000
People's Press	100,000
Peoples Films	100,000
	<u>\$545,000</u>

The first three items totaling \$345,000 were regular standard parts of the MEM program. Yen wanted \$200,000 from the RF toward them, plus support of four foreign fellowships. The last two were ideas only, on paper, but are to be noted here. The People's Press item, \$100,000, has been pledged unconditionally by the Field Foundation; this was the project which Mr. JDR, Jr., in 1945 declined to contribute \$80,000 a year to for five years. Toward the People's Film project (described at length by Miss Ching-yi T'ang in a memo to Mr. O. B. Bosworth dated February 25, 1947) NAR in a March 30, 1946 letter to Yen confirmed a willingness to contribute \$100,000 "personally or by the proposed association" (ATA) provided that Yen could obtain the additional funds necessary to carry out the program. The motion picture industry was the logical other source. NAR would wish to approve the People's Film budget and the pledges to meet it before making his contribution. On September 27, 1948 NAR by cable cancelled this pledge, the conditions not having been met after two and a half years. But on November 30, 1948, NAR again cabled Yen at Nanking, this time announcing a contribution by LSR and himself between them of stock (this stock at time of gift had a combined value of \$10,387) as an evidence of continuing interest and belief in the Movement and to help with immediate organizational problems pertaining to Yen's part in the work of the Joint Commission. At the same time NAR stated that if the visual education program should be renewed later he would consider helping such new project at that time.

The Rockefeller Foundation meanwhile in April 1948 declined to contribute further to the MEM on the ground of insufficient knowledge of precisely what the organization was doing, and because the figures which Yen supplied "simply did not hold together", and it was impossible to construct a budget out of any information he had supplied. And at any rate Yen had drawn up his \$545,000 expanded program with a view to strengthening MEM in advance of Congressional appropriations. And now U.S. aid of the magnitude of up to \$33.8 millions would make further Foundation support unnecessary. Yen has estimated that illiteracy may be wiped out at \$1 per capita, and reconstruction taught at \$5 per capita. At Secretary Marshall's request he had offered a memorandum proposing aid for China across ten years aggregating \$2,100,000,000 on an ascending scale, starting with \$30 million for the first year. He hoped MEM could assist in this mass application, but realized that the whole task was too vast for a private agency.

North of Chungking. Generalissimo Chiang gave approximately 83 acres for its campus. Eight provincial governments on their own initiative and out of their war-strained treasuries made contributions. The College now has four departments: Education, Sociology and Social Welfare, Agriculture and Economics, and Hydraulic Engineering. It cooperates with UNESCO's Fundamental Education project and with the Chinese Government. Its work is on a primitive scale adapted to a primitive culture. The public health once emphasized has not been developed since the war; it remains, however, an objective. The College graduated 51 in July 1948 at its first commencement for four-year students, and started a new term with only 200 students out of 3,350 candidates.

Also there is a West China Experimental Center which besides combatting illiteracy and teaching rural reconstruction attempts to improve local government. Its men occupy magistracies and other government posts. The 51 College graduates all joined up voluntarily with the Center. In weavers' cooperatives and warehouse and credit cooperatives, the MEM is endeavoring to fight usury, repel voracious landlords and improve the status of the peasant. Farm cooperatives are in expanding number.

JOINT COMMISSION ON RURAL RECONSTRUCTION IN CHINA

This Commission, established in 1948, is really, though not officially, related to the MEM. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1948, passed by Congress in April, contained a specific China Aid Act. The China Aid Act provides \$338 millions for one year of economic aid to China, of which not more than one-tenth, or \$33.8 million, may be devoted to rural reconstruction. This is where the MEM comes in. The MEM, though not specifically mentioned in the Act, certainly is not precluded, and is logically set to receive some of the funds. (This was the situation in the spring of 1948.) Indeed official Washington has informally labeled the Act the "Jimmy Yen plan". Final decision as to whether and how much the Commission may receive rests with E.C.A. Administrator Paul Hoffman, because the Joint Commission has been made a part of the European Relief Program. Incidentally, Hoffman is on the Board of the American Committee of the MEM, while Yen is a Chinese member of the Joint Commission and secretary of the Committee.

The Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction in China consists of two U. S. citizens appointed by the President of the United States and three Chinese appointed by the President of China. The members elect the chairman. The Act empowers this Commission, subject to the control of the E.C.A. Administrator to formulate and carry out a program for reconstruction in rural areas of China, including research and training. The Joint Commission was formally established in August 1948 at Nanking. The Commission has been beset by contending political pressures originating both in the United States and China, turning about questions of veiled as distinct from appointed control in the administration of the Commission's work, and in fact about whether that work should be made agricultural and rural industrial to a degree surmounting the educational and health considerations which were so much a feature of Yen's concepts. As lately as October 1948 frictions persisted. Chiang Mon-lin as chairman was the only officer of the Joint Commission, and it had no employees. In December Yen was still trying to get the Commission going somehow, with the work in Szechuan and Hunan to be carried out, whatever happened. Four regional offices were decided on.

YEN AS A PERSONALITY

It should be clear from the foregoing that to all effects Yen and the Mass Education Movement, Inc. represent one and the same thing. Other points equally clear are that out of an obscure incident thirty years ago a far-reaching idea grew and expanded, and that the driving force behind it was Jimmy Yen's charm and power of persuasion. At the same time, though Yen is everywhere liked and respected, a division in opinion has arisen within recent years both in this country and in China over whether his salesmanship has outrun his administrative ability, and also as to whether the Mass Education Movement as a project has declined from its crest, becoming less live.

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FINANCES: The General File is barren of anything approximating a report of receipts and disbursements by the American Committee of the MEM covering any period of time.

EVALUATION: This is generally implicit in the running account of activities given in the foregoing.

LATEST ACTION: On December 2, 1948 contributions as follows of Socony-Vacuum Oil stock to the American-Chinese Committee of the Mass Education Movement:

LSR:	411 shares valued at	\$6,987
NAR:	200 shares valued at	3,400
		<u>\$10,387</u>

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