

CHINESE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE MASS EDUCATION MOVEMENT

REQUEST Mr. E. C. Carter as Chairman of the American Cooperating Committee asks Mr. Rockefeller to contribute \$125,000 toward a \$500,000 emergency fund being raised to make possible the qualitative development of the Chinese National Association of the Mass Education Movement during the next few years.

PREVIOUS INTEREST None directly. President Wilbur has conferred with Mr. Fosdick. Dr. Vincent, Dr. Day, Mr. Arnett and the Secretary have met Mr. Yen and heard his description of the Movement.

HISTORY The Mass Education idea originated in Y.C. James Yen's work in the Chinese labor camps in France during the world war; and from a small class of laborers in Boulogne, the educational work later spread to a high proportion of the 200,000 Chinese in different part of France. The "Chinese Laborer's Weekly", read by the men as they became literate, was first published in Paris in 1919. Intensive study and small scale experiments in China under the auspices of the Chinese National Committee of the YMCA followed in 1920-22. During these years research done in Pai-Hua (the colloquial language) resulted in the selection of the fundamental characters of the language. These were incorporated into the 1,000 character lessons. Large scale mass education campaigns were conducted in various cities in 1922-23. The Chinese National Association of the Mass Education Movement was organized in August 1923 with its headquarters in Peking. Provisional and district associations have since been formed to assure the permanence and stability of the Movement. During the years 1923-24, thirty-two self-supporting city mass education associations sprang up, as well as many rural associations. Today the Movement has reached, it is believed, approximately 5,000,000 people taught by about 100,000 teachers.

THE PROBLEM China has a population of some 450,000,000 people, or one-fourth of the world's population. Approximately 85% of these people are entirely illiterate. There are two divisions of language - the classical, the language of the classical literature; and the colloquial, the language of the people. The difference between these two languages is as great as the difference between Latin and English. In addition, the colloquial language is divided into many provincial dialects, these in themselves as different as two separate European languages. The syllabic characteristics used to designate syllables in the colloquial language are, however, consistent throughout China. Pronunciation, however, varies widely. For example: it is as if our "e.g." were read "for example" in one section and "zum Beispiel" in another. The illiteracy problem is spread throughout China but reaches its worst in the rural districts, comprising over 80% of the population.

REPORT The first work of the Mass Education Movement was to study

CHINESE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE MASS EDUCATION
MOVEMENT

-2-

the Pai-Hua literature and select 1,000 characters which seemed fundamental. The so-called 1,000 character lesson books were prepared on the basis of these studies. It was soon found that this basis was not enough. A further study was made of over 600,000 characters used in business correspondence, proclamations, railway signs, etc. and disclosed the need of adding 200 more fundamental characters to the basic character vocabulary. The next step was in the direction of specialization. The 1,000 characters and the content of the material in which they appeared were re-adapted for the farmer, the city dweller and the soldier. Incorporated was not only the purpose of teaching the native to read, but also simple lessons in ethics, health, vocation and citizenship. As the need for further education became apparent, dictionaries giving a somewhat larger vocabulary were prepared. These dictionaries gave the sounds of words in the phonetic script, also being developed independently, and the meaning of words in the 1,000 character vocabulary. The work, at first extensive, became also intensive. In addition to the general literacy movement which is now being carried in some places through higher schools composed of graduates of the first instruction, an intensive demonstration of the Movement is carried on in Ting Hsien in order that it might become a demonstration and training center for the future reconstruction of rural China.

PERSONNEL The National Executive Board of Trustees includes Madam Hsi Ling, wife of the ex-Premier as Chairman, Mr. Chow, President of a Peking bank and Treasurer, and a number of highly trained Chinese formerly holding important positions in the Chinese government and in Chinese education.

FINANCES The Association has an income of approximately \$25,000 a year, the three principal sources being a grant of \$7,500 from the China Foundation, \$2,500 from royalties of publications and \$15,000 in personal donations, largely from Chinese. This budget represents the work of the headquarters staff only. All field work is financed by the locality or group which carries it on. For instance, during the year 1927 it is estimated that contributions in services and quarters amounting to \$25,000 were received, that \$325,000 was expended by cities, provinces and the various national armies and that services and buildings were donated in the field amounting in value to \$500,000. The work is set up on an extremely low economic scale. The Chinese teachers receive only tea money, about seventy-five cents to one dollar a month for their services. The average cost of the first course is about fifty cents. The books cost five cents a piece. The fund of \$500,000 is to be employed entirely in increasing the effectiveness of the headquarters staff already organized in skeleton on the basis finally desired. It would be expanded at the average of about \$100,000 annually, with the maximum in the third year and the minimum in the

CHINESE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE MASS EDUCATION
MOVEMENT

-3-

fifth. This fund, although disbursed by the Association, would be in the hands of a finance committee consisting of Mr. Charles E. Bennett, Manager of the National City Bank in Peking; Roger S. Greene of the Rockefeller Foundation; and Dr. Leighton Stuart, President of Yen Ching University.

RECOMMENDATION The enlarged program of the Association seems soundly conceived. Starting with first things, that program would attempt to gradually construct an increasingly literate China in simple lessons of health, industry, morals and citizenship. Always the work is done by Chinese native to the region in which they work and on bases closely related to the actual life of the Chinese. For instance, rural research in the problem of irrigation has resulted in a 30% improvement of the Chinese wooden pump rather than a recommendation of the adoption of occidental methods. Several fundamental questions occurred to the secretary:

1. Could not the Mass Education Movement become at any time a tool in the hands of a political group? Investigation discloses the fact that the Association has served all of the national armies and all of the political groups without discrimination and has refused consistently to accept offers of large grants from any one of the national armies, except as those grants were employed within those armies themselves. The Association wishes to keep absolutely free from government support until a generally accepted national government has appeared.

2. Does the program represent a fundamental approach to the Chinese language problem? Here the secretary has consulted with Mr. Li of Harvard and Professor Sapir of Chicago. It is apparent that China cannot adopt an alphabet as has recently been done in Turkey. The present method seems the only method of approaching the literacy problem.

3. What are the possibilities of self-support after the five year grant has ceased? Mr. Yen believes that the five year period will allow them to build up an adequate income through contributions from over-seas Chinese, many of whom are wealthy, from Chinese foundations, from popular subscriptions, from the sale of literature and from national and provincial government grants.

4. Will not American grants interfere with the essentially Chinese character of this Movement so far indicated by the earlier support? Mr. Roger Greene writes "This is a danger to be guarded against but if the continuance of his (Mr. Yen's) work depends on getting money abroad for a few years, as he evidently feels that it does, I should be inclined to defer to his judgment provided too great a share of the annual budget did not come from non-Chinese sources". As indicated under finances, the budget of the central work of the association, even at \$100,000 annually, would be only a small part - roughly about one-twentieth - of the

CHINESE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE MASS EDUCATION
MOVEMENT

-4-

whole funds already expended annually in this Movement.

It is a pity that funds at present used in competitive missionary endeavor could not be devoted to this fundamental approach to China's problem. This apparently, however, cannot be.

Consideration of a contribution of \$50,000 on condition that at least \$250,000 be secured from other sources is suggested.

ACTION RESOLVED, that the Advisory Committee recommend to Mr. Rockefeller that he contribute \$50,000 outright and an additional \$50,000 when they have secured \$250,000 (including the outright contribution.