

The final session of the Conference emphasized the great need for constant Catholic co-operation on the international level if the religious possibilities of television are to be fully realized. Special commissions are to be set up to deal with such matters as Catholic exchange programmes (and in particular a regular magazine programme of Catholic actuality which will draw on material provided by the different countries), educational films, missionary films (of which many exist, in isolation as it were, but which could be of great value if made internationally available) and the setting up of a library of telefilms. The Pope's warning, that special vigilance is necessary in the case of television since 'its performances penetrate the sanctuary of the family', is a reminder that Catholic opinion should not be content with a merely negative attitude. The first UNDA Conference was encouraging evidence that there are already available Catholics with a knowledge and respect for the new medium who may be trusted to do all they can to give a positive and Christian direction to its immense potentialities.

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## TELEVISION AND RURAL EDUCATION

### A UNESCO Experiment in France

**T**HE French television service, in collaboration with UNESCO, is at present carrying out an experiment in the form of transmissions intended for rural viewers gathered for collective viewing, or 'Tele-Clubs'. The general purpose of this experiment is to discover, on the basis of concrete evidence, to what extent it is possible to put a completely new instrument like television at the service of popular education, and to make use of it for the material and spiritual progress and the international understanding that UNESCO wants to help its member-states to promote among their peoples.

Television, that latest of the new instruments of information and of intellectual communication, has its own characteristics, methods, and rights, which set it in a category apart from radio

and cinema. Television can be particularly useful to rural populations who more often than not live in small isolated centres which are without any technical equipment. Obviously television has as yet only reached the first stages of its development; yet if many countries are deprived of it by this circumstance, a consideration of, and experiment on, its use as a means of popular rural education, coming at this relatively early stage, would seem to be all the more useful and promising. In the case of television, much, if not everything, still remains to be done and in most countries the action of teachers and artists can keep pace with, if not precede, the material progress of this form of broadcasting. And on other grounds the possibility and interest of a collective reception organized in rural districts deserves careful investigation, for in many countries the greater part of the population is composed of rural families too poor to buy television sets individually.

The French government and, more especially, the French television service, have offered to collaborate with UNESCO in carrying out such an experiment. The conditions under which television is organized in France correspond in many respects to the situation outlined in the resolution of the General Conference. In particular a 'Tele-club' movement has existed in France for several years. Such groups, generally installed in small rural centres, purchase a receiving set which is usually placed in a school-room for use at meetings for collective viewing. Further, the social and economic conditions of French country districts do not differ too fundamentally from those present in certain other countries where television will be developing in the next few years.

The research which UNESCO will thus be able to undertake will include both transmissions and investigation on the reactions of the audiences. Special programmes will be produced which will make it possible to determine in what way television can most usefully contribute to an improvement of the methods used in agriculture and to a raising of the standard of living of rural populations.

The plan to be followed in the course of the series of proposed transmissions is based on four principal points:

I. *Statement of facts*

Presentation of the actual life of the peasants of the region

chosen. What are the special difficulties experienced by those who live in the country and by those who depend upon agricultural production? There is something to be done. What? And how?

Indication of the possible solution to the problem created by the actual state of affairs: mechanization and modernization of farms and the adaptation this presupposes.

2. *Investigation of the problems and possible solutions*

Possible obstacles: credit—the splitting up of property—the individualist spirit of small farming landowners. Some solutions do exist, other remain to be found—importance of the existence of a community spirit.

3. *Human consequences of this evolution*

Necessity of a solution which is not only technical but also human. Modernization and mechanization are nothing in themselves, they must be accompanied by a deep change in one's mode of life and way of thinking: the role of woman and of youth.

4. *The first stage must be initiated*

This evolution which is increasingly transforming an occupation into an industry primarily requires an education—Schools of Agriculture and adult courses exist or can be set up. We have seen why, now we must see how.

To enable the use of television to be investigated in valid conditions, such transmissions will have to be carried out with the greatest possible care and under aspects which are as varied as possible: they must have recourse to all existing techniques; the subject must inform and stimulate at the same time, without however neglecting the need for recreation and relaxation on the part of an isolated public which has to work hard and can only occasionally enjoy other means of leisure. Moreover, although such transmissions are primarily intended for the tele-clubs which, in principle, arrange for each programme to be followed by a discussion, obviously they will also be received by individuals both in town and country. It follows that they will have to be sufficiently lively and interesting to hold the attention of these widely differing publics.

In organizing these transmissions the French service concerned and UNESCO are pursuing clearly defined aims. Their objective is to transmit information capable of developing a certain line of

thought and to provoke lively discussion out of which may come, subsequently, some definite action such as the creation of adult agricultural courses in the villages where the tele-clubs function. In what measure can these intentions be carried out? An extensive inquiry should enable this to be ascertained.

Such an inquiry will primarily bear upon the immediate reactions of the public towards transmissions organized with a view to the experiment, and also to television programmes in general, at least to the extent to which they are received in the tele-clubs. As we are concerned with studying the cultural importance of this new medium of expression, television, and the part it could play in adult education, it would be purposeless and harmful to seek to isolate the transmissions especially organized by the French services concerned, with the collaboration of UNESCO, from the rest of the programmes.

At this stage the inquiry will chiefly be concerned with such problems as the subjects suitable for television transmissions, the best methods of presentation to a rural population, the desirability or otherwise of television for formal education. It will also investigate how much is retained of the transmissions, and whether members of the tele-club enroll afterwards in the adult agricultural courses.

At the second stage, the inquiry will seek to compare television results with those given by other means such as the radio, press or cinema, and to know whether certain subjects are best presented by some medium other than television. The success of these special programmes will be compared with that of the ordinary television transmissions, and investigation will be made as to why people favour one programme rather than another, what are the differences of reaction between groups, and individual viewers. A final and detailed report will be drawn up.

This experiment is only the beginning of an investigation it is hoped to initiate on a much larger scale.

[Adapted from UNESCO report, February 1954]