

also linked to the demands of the newly independent States seeking to rehabilitate or protect their traditional cultures. With the development of the mass information media, among other things, culture is no longer the privilege of the few. However, "cultural rights" are not easy to define.

The debates brought out the existence of a conflict between the right to culture and the rights of cultures. In the first case, what is involved is the individual's right to culture, a right of which he may be deprived by poverty or by political oppression; in the second, it is the right of cultures to survival in the face of radical changes taking place in the world today. The first of these rights calls for modernization: the second has much to fear from it.

This contradiction between the respect for man and the respect for cultures is related to a certain duality of meaning in the word "culture": it can be used in the "élite" sense, meaning something which is in short supply, especially for the underprivileged sections of mankind, or it can be used in the anthropological sense meaning, roughly, the distinctive mode of life of a given community. The élite meaning is relevant to the rights of individuals to culture, whereas the anthropological meaning concerns the right of cultures to survive.

There was unanimous agreement that, in the developing countries, the right to culture is in substance the right to education, and many participants felt that in these countries the improvement of economic and social conditions is the first, basic prerequisite for the existence of a culture and for the possibility of enjoying it. They also agreed that the problem of culture is just as acute in the affluent countries.

Other questions discussed at the meeting included mass culture, world culture, the democratization of culture, the existence of a cultural "non-public", the importance of cultural interchange, the relationship between artistic creation and the political and social environment, the artist and society, science, technology and culture, etc. The experts frequently referred to the powerful influences of the mass information media which, under existing economic conditions, constitute a barrier between cultural producers and the general public. The meeting concluded by preparing a Statement on Cultural Rights as Human Rights.

### **Water Pollution and the Law, *The UNESCO Courier*, Paris, January 1969.**

Almost every country in the world has tried to meet the threats of water pollution by means of legislative action. But passing laws does not automatically bring the situation under control. Unless legislation is supported by a strong climate of public opinion and unless adequate funds and staff to enforce the regulations are provided, the results are usually disappointing.

Because of the importance of legislative measures, both national and international, increasing attention has been directed toward this feature of pollution abatement. In recent years, the International Water Supply Association has devoted much time to the legal aspects of this problem. Similarly, the International Law Association, the International Association of Legal Science and the International Institute of Administrative Sciences have taken up these questions.

Where watercourses have formed the boundaries of, or crossed states, agreements, conventions and treaties have been entered into. Significant examples are those between Belgium and France, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, and Switzerland and Italy.

Experience in the joint international management of watercourses is of long standing and is sometimes effective. But more often there have been delays in taking action to maintain an agreed quality of water acceptable to all countries concerned. Among other examples, this has occurred in the case of international arrangements on the Rhine and Lake Constance in Europe, on the Great Lakes in North America, and on the Rio Grande in Central America.

Wherever population density is high and hence pollution abatement calls for constant vigilance, continuing efforts will no doubt be made to establish at least common criteria and standards of water purity, and increasing discussions are likely to take place on the best ways of preserving the purity of waters.

The history of national legislation abounds with examples of declarations of good intention and high aspiration, but nowhere are these matched by equally high standards of implementation. Abatement of pollution has not been at a standstill. On the contrary, a great deal has been done, but not enough and not fast enough.

The situation was summed up succinctly a few years ago by a World Health Organization expert committee which declared: "Countries with severe laws against pollution have not in fact avoided the occurrence of widespread pollution. One reason for this may be that laws calling for no pollution at all do not represent a practical policy and therefore fall into disrepute. In a world becoming rapidly urbanized and industrialized, it is not possible to preserve rivers in their natural condition. The law should aim at controlling pollution."

In spite of such clear definitions of the situation, countries, large and small, under the lash of perfectionists and opportunists, continue to pass acts designed to recapture the pristine purity of past eras. The record of such legislation is far from gratifying as is pointed out by two important analytical studies published by the World Health Organization.

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