President review here 1937

On May 23, 1937, John Davison Rockefeller, the founder of The Rockefeller Foundation, died at Ormond Beach, Florida, in his ninety-eighth. year. Mr. Rockefeller's gifts for philanthropic purposes were roughly 1530,000,000. He gave a total of $446,- 00,000 to establish four funds: The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, the General Education Board, The Rockefeller Foundation, and The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. In addition, Mr. Rockefeller made individual contributions of approximately $84,000,000 for educational, religious, and charitable purposes. Since their founding, the four funds established by Mr.

Rockefeller have expended a total of $645,000,000 in 88 different countries.

Mr, Rockefeller always made his gifts after thorough study and careful planning; and it is perhaps appropriate at this time to mention one or two principles which guided him. These principles were not necessarily formulated at the beginning of his career; rather they were the result of his long experience in philanthropic activity. In the first place, he trusted the future. He did not think that benevolence and wisdom were confined to his generation. He was not under the illusion that what seems important today will necessarily be important tomorrow. He did not believe in tying up foundations to rigid and unchangeable purposes.

When The Rockefeller Foundation was incorporated, the sole purpose stated in its charter

was "to promote the well-being of mankind throughout the world." It was characteristic of

Mr. Rockefeller's developing point of view that in 1920 he wrote to the trustees of the General Education Board as follows: If in any gifts heretofore made to you by me there are any restrictions or limitations as to the specific purpose for which they are to be used, I hereby revoke such restrictions.

In the second place, Mr. Rockefeller did not believe that it was wise to attempt to maintain foundations in perpetuity. "Perpetuity is a pretty long time," he remarked. It is perhaps not generally known that under their charters both The Rockefeller Foundation and the General Education Board are authorized to expend principal as well as income. In addition to income, the Foundation has thus far spent $87,000,000 from its principal fund, while the General Education Board has spent $140,000,000.

Two Rockefeller boards have already terminated their activities: The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial founded by Mr. Rockefeller, was merged with the Foundation in 1929 after having spent $27,500,000 of its principal fund; the International Education Board, established by Mr. Rockefeller, Junior, was completely liquidated in 1937. The General Education Board is now approaching liquidation.

How long The Rockefeller Foundation may continue depends upon the opportunities for expenditure which lie ahead.

These ideas of Mr. Rockefeller's have had great influence in shaping the policies of the boards which he established. The temptation to visualize the future in terms of the present—to think of the needs and methods of today as having a sure claim to immortality—is one which confronts trustees as well as founders of philanthropic foundations.

How can we assume that our guesses have any greater validity or are made with any clearer foresight?

This question led the trustees of The Rockefeller Foundation and of the General Education

Board to adopt a principle by which recipients of gifts to endowment funds, for whatever purpose given, have wide discretion in the uses to which those funds may be put. Specifically, under a resolution passed by both boards in 1937, notification is sent to each recipient that it is the desire of the boards that the gift, "whether the income only is spent or the principal as well, shall always be regarded as available for use in the broadest way, so as best to promote the general purpose for which it was made.

These liberalizing provisions represent an attempt to free the future from frozen funds and

"tired" endowments, in the belief that the wisdom of this generation cannot be substituted for the wisdom of the next in the solution of problems hidden from our eyes. The endowments affected by these provisions amount to $51,000,000 given to date by The Rockefeller Foundation, and $ 148,000,000 given by the General Education Board.

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The Foundation's program, in terms of broad objective, is the advancement of knowledge.

Within this general area there are certain specific fields upon which emphasis is at present being placed, The emphasis in the medical sciences is largely on psychiatry; in the natural sciences, on experimental biology; in public health, on the development of a trained personnel and on the study and control of certain diseases; in the social sciences, on such basic problems as international relations, social security, and public administration ; and in the humanities, on efforts which tend to raise the general cultural level and to promote cultural interchange between countries. These defined objectives are not rigidly interpreted.

They serve merely as guiding marks in an effort to give the program a reasonable degree of concentration.

Except to a limited extent in public health, the Foundation is not an operating organization. It conducts no researches of its own. Its activities are confined to the support of other agencies—universities, laboratories, and research institutes —and to the training, through fellowships, of competent personnel in the various fields of knowledge.

NEW INTERNATIONAL BARRIERS p12

From the beginning of its activities twenty-five years ago the Foundation has been guided by the objective written into its charter: "The well-being of mankind throughout the world" In accordance with this purpose the aim of the trustees has been to maintain the work of the Foundation on an international plane without consideration of flags or political doctrines or creeds or sects. Particularly in a program based on the advancement of knowledge it is imperative to disregard the geographical boundaries which arbitrarily and often unhappily divide the earth into an patchwork of senseless antagonisms. For in the last analysis knowledge cannot be nationalized. No successful embargoes can be maintained against the export or import of ideas. In all the clash of competing nationalisms there is here an underlying principle of unity: the single aim and language of science in the discovery of truth. It is this principle which challenges the twentieth century with the conception of civilization as a cooperative achievement and with the ideal of intellectual capital as an international possession.

A foundation, therefore, whose aim is to assist in pushing out the boundaries of knowledge must necessarily work wherever the best tools are to be found. In its search for high talent and promising opportunities it must assume that frontiers are not the forbidding barriers they pretend to be.

This ideal which for more than two decades The Rockefeller Foundation has consistently at-

tempted to follow has in recent years encountered serious difficulties. And these difficulties are increasing. Objective scholarship is possible only where thought is free.

Particularly in the broad range of subjects covered by the social sciences, and in the humanities as well, the world has recently witnessed in several countries the progressive disintegration of creative scholarship.

PUBLIC HEALTH: A WORLD PROBLEM p 15

Twenty-five years ago, when The Rockefeller Foundation was created, the first work it undertook was in public health. Dr. Wickliffe Rose, the director of this activity, laid out the line of attack which has since been consistently followed by the trustees. "Unless public health is conceived in international terms," he said, "the strategic opportunity of our generation'will be lost."

For two decades and a half the Foundation has been guided by this principle. Jt has followed

yellow fever to Central and South America and Africa, and it has studied such diseases as malaria and hookworm in areas as wide apart as the West Indies and the South Sea Islands. Laboratory techniques have been brought to the assistance of field work all over the world in influenza, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, yaws, syphilis, rabies, and the common cold. Schools have been established for the training of public health personnel; and governmental agencies, national and local, have been assisted in building up more adequate health departments. Altogether, the Foundation has operated in 77 different countries and

colonies and has expended approximately $63,000,000 on public health work.

Disease knows no frontiers and has never been a respecter of flags. In this field of public health, more clearly perhaps than in any other phase of human effort, one sees the complete inadequacy and meaninglessness of the conception of the absolute sovereignty of the state.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EXPERIMENTAL BIOLOGY p 30

As a distinguished biologist at Johns Hopkins University recently wrote: "Every thoughtful person will admit that there is a kind of moral necessity to go forward in the attempt

to get a better and more comprehensive understanding of the whole nature of man. The material, mechanical civilization he has evolved ay easily become a monster to destroy him unless he learns better to comprehend, develop and control his biological nature." For this reason The Rockefeller Foundation has, for the present at least, in the natural sciences, given its major support to experimental biology.

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN 1937 p44

Since 1929, when the social sciences were included within its program, roughly $30,000,000 has been given by the Foundation to these studies. In 1937, nearly $2,000,000 was appropriated—in part for the promotion of research in three fields, i.e., social security, international relations, and public administration, and in part for less specialized work in the general field of the social sciences.

The three fields of specific interest—social security, international relations, and public ad-

ministration—have been emphasized not only because they present acute problems, but because they seem to offer a chance to secure public support for the application and testing of the generalizations of social scientists. In no case are the grants of the Foundation in these fields intended to achieve merely a single objective. In making a grant, usually there is expectation—• or, at least, hope—of increasing scientific knowledge, improving the tools of research, strengthening the scientific personnel in the field, interpreting the results of research to those who have the responsibility of dealing directly with social phenomena, and developing facilities and opportunities for testing the hypothesis of the scientist.

INVESTING IN BRAINS P58

While the Foundation has often appropriated sums for the erection and equipment of laboratories and the purchase of experimental materials, its primary interest is in men. The Foundation's fellowship program is an outright investment in brains. Through this program, an endeavor is made to select and train those promising young men and women upon whom will fall the scientific leadership of the future.

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES p239

IN 1937 The Rockefeller Foundation's program in the social sciences continued to emphasize limited objectives and to concentrate upon areas of special interest. As in 1936 attention was given to three fields—social security, public administration, and international relations—which appear to present opportunities for the direct application of the results of research to problems of immediate social significance. The Foundation in supporting work in these areas has hoped that scientific knowledge might be increased, that public opinion might be clarified through the effective presentation of the results of research, and that techniques for dealing with the practical activities of organization and administration would evolve.