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Hemispheric Cooperation in Science

A new mechanism for facilitating enhanced cooperation among scientists of the Western Hemisphere was created on 10 July 1974 at a meeting in Recife, Brazil, attended by scientists from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, the United States, and Venezuela.* A Coordinating Committee of the Associations for the Advancement of Science in the Americas was formed whose purposes are (i) to unite the American scientific community, to serve the development of the nations and the well-being of their peoples; (ii) to promote, in a cooperative manner, the use of science for the benefit of the people of the hemisphere; (iii) to stimulate the formation of associations for the advancement of science in those countries of the hemisphere which do not have such an association.

Impetus for the formation of the Coordinating Committee was provided by the success of the international meeting held in Mexico City on 20 June to 4 July 1973. Organized around the theme "Science and Man in the Americas," the gathering brought together some of the leading scientists of the Americas. The agenda covered many of the areas in which science and technology interact with societal problems common to the countries of this hemisphere. In a speech at the meeting, Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, then chairman of the Board of Directors of AAAS, proposed the creation of an Association of Associations for the Advancement of Science. A series of exploratory discussions followed at Mexico City, and later in Bogota and San Francisco. These revealed a common desire to move toward implementing Dr. Seaborg's proposal by improving communication among this hemisphere's scientists. Accordingly another international meeting with a repeat of the theme "Science and Man in the Americas" is likely to occur in 1977. There was also talk of smaller gatherings devoted to single topics such as energy.

Considerable enthusiasm greeted a proposal to establish a journal tentatively titled *Science for Development*. This would be similar in many respects to *Science* but without research reports. It would contain a substantial proportion of articles devoted to major problems of Latin America, for example, tropical agriculture, natural products, arid lands, population, and technology transfer and deal with science related to such problems. The journal would be trilingual—English, Portuguese, and Spanish. Articles would have abstracts in all three languages. There would be coeditors for each of the languages, and the journal would probably be printed in one of the Spanish-speaking countries.

The geography of Latin America, with its nearly impassable mountains and jungles, has long dictated the existence of isolated communities and countries. In former years letters traveled more rapidly from one Latin city to New York than to a nearby country. But times are changing. A Colombian scientist told me, "We have passed from the age of the mule to the age of the airplane in not much more than a decade." Attitudes toward social problems are also changing. Throughout the Western Hemisphere there is growing awareness of the potential role of science and technology in development. The circumstances of the times make this moment an unusually propitious one in which to initiate cooperative efforts.

The path to success in joint hemispheric ventures will not be an easy one. There are differences in language and culture and in tempo and modes of doing business that will be difficult to surmount. However, the exploratory discussions were conducted in a considerate and civilized way leading to the belief that the activities of the Coordinating Committee could foster a pleasant and continuing useful interchange.

—PHILIP H. ABELSON

* Those attending included Alberto C. Taquini and Luis Antonio Santalo, Argentina; Oscar Sala and Luiz Edmundo de Magalhães, Brazil; Carlos Perez Martinez, Colombia; Edmundo de Alba, Mexico; Leonard M. Rieser and Philip H. Abelson, United States; and Tulio Arends, Venezuela. Secretary of the Committee is Dr. Carlos Perez Martinez, Coordination Committee of the Associations for the Advancement of Science in the Americas, P.O. Box 783, Bucaramanga, Colombia.