



UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ÉDUCATION, LA SCIENCE ET LA CULTURE

TÉLÉPHONE : SUFFREN 86-00  
SUFFREN 98-70 - TÉLÉGR.: UNESCO PARIS  
SOLFERINO 99-48

Place de Fontenoy, PARIS 7<sup>e</sup>

In your reply, please refer to  
En répondant, veuillez rappeler

N° NS/9/40-88A

21 November 1961

Dear Dr. Keck:

I am in receipt of a copy of your letter of 30 October to Dr. G.F. Humphrey, President of SCOR, and his answer to that letter. Because the correspondence relates to matters in which Unesco is vitally interested, I am taking the liberty of commenting on your letter.

In particular we are concerned with the proposed Indian Ocean Biological Center to be established in Cochin. Our interest stems from the fact that Unesco is a cosponsor of the International Indian Ocean Expedition, that Unesco paid the travel expenses of the participants invited by SCOR to discuss the problem in Cochin and New Delhi (14-18 August 1961), and that Unesco intends to purchase essential equipment for this center and to finance employment of the Curator of the International Collections there.

I note that you are not content with U.S. representation at the meeting in Cochin and New Delhi which discussed the organization of the Center. We have followed the practice of SCOR in dealing with the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Oceanography (NASCO) when seeking nominations for U.S. participants in meetings of experts. If there is a more appropriate organization with which to deal, we would be grateful for its name, since there will undoubtedly be other analogous meetings organized in the future. In the case of the Indian meetings, we had assumed that the presence of Dr. John Ryther, coordinator of the U.S. biological program for the Expedition, would ensure that the plans were compatible with the overall interests of the American marine biologists.

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Dr. David D. Keck,  
Program Director for Systematic Biology  
National Science Foundation  
Washington 25, D.C.

Thurman (4)  
Ryther  
File 812.6

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At the meetings in question, representatives of Australia, Germany, India, Japan, Pakistan, U.K. and U.S.A. agreed that the principal group of marine organisms to be handled by the Center would be the zooplankton. This was because only in the case of zooplankton did it seem practicable to devise a simple and quick standard sampling method likely to be adopted by most ships participating in the Expedition. Agreement on standard methods of sampling fish larvae, adult fish, other nektonic creatures or benthic organisms seemed far less likely. Furthermore, in many cases such collections are more difficult or time consuming, and it did not seem probable that the specialists interested in these organisms would be willing to have them sorted or examined at the Center.

To me, the remarkable result of these meetings was that the participants, including those from the U.S., did agree on a standard method of collecting zooplankton to be used in addition to the more specialized methods required for their own studies, and did agree to donate these "standard" zooplankton samples to the Center, where they would be sorted under the direction of the Curator, and distributed to specialists in various parts of the globe. Provision was also made for other samples, either of zooplankton or other organisms, to be processed at the Center in accordance with arrangements between the Center and the collecting laboratory.

You state "it is difficult at this early stage to visualize the quantity and the schedule of receipt of biological materials that will funnel through the sorting center at Cochin." At least we may expect that several thousand "standard" zooplankton samples will come to the Center during the next few years. In addition it seemed likely that some countries, particularly the U.S., would send other material to the Center, so that it could be sorted at reasonable cost and in finite time.

Finally, I would like to comment on your suggestions for the training of Indian scientists and others from the region. We have considered that a variety of training methods would be necessary. Certainly the presence of foreign specialists at the Center will contribute much to the training of other scientists working there. We hope that many of the scientists from the region will have the opportunity to work aboard the American biological ship and other research vessels participating in the Expedition. Some relatively advanced scientists interested in particular groups might well benefit from the opportunity to go to the U.S. or other countries to work with specialists in those groups. And some promising young scientists will surely be discovered who would merit relatively long periods of study in advanced institutions abroad.

In short, we are actively involved in development of the Indian Ocean Biological Center and are anxious that it meet the needs of the Indian scientists and others participating in the International Indian Ocean Expedition. We are working closely with the Indian Government and with SCOR in this matter and would be willing to discuss with them changes in our plans if the scientific community feels they are inadequate.

Yours very truly,

Warren S. Wooster  
Director

Office of Oceanography

cc: G.F. Humphrey  
R.C. Vetter