

## Conference of Universities.

IN the programme of the annual conference of the universities of the United Kingdom, which was held on May 12 at King's College, London, the first place was given to the subject of the financial outlook of the universities. The income and expenditure for 1921-22 of the universities and university colleges of Great Britain in receipt of annual Treasury grants are displayed in Tables 7 and 8 of the returns recently published by the University Grants Committee. The aggregate income of these institutions (Oxford and Cambridge are excluded from the returns, their grants having been "special emergency" grants) is shown as 3,578,768*l.*, derived from: Parliamentary grants (35.3 per cent.), Fees for tuition and examination (35.7 per cent.), Local Authorities' grants (11.7 per cent.), Endowments (10.3 per cent.), Donations and Subscriptions (2.7 per cent.), and other sources (4.3 per cent.). Of expenditure 49.3 per cent. was on Salaries of Teaching Staff, 13.4 per cent. on other Departmental Maintenance, 13.1 per cent. on Maintenance of Premises, and 10.2 per cent. on Administration.

The outstanding feature of the situation is the cramping of university activities owing to want of funds. "The grave condition of commerce and industry," says the Committee, "has temporarily called a halt to the forward movement which derived its impulse from the experience of the War: such a halt was natural—perhaps inevitable—but it cannot be prolonged without arresting developments which can only be neglected at grave risk to national efficiency." The Committee finds in the universities' expenditure on their libraries an illustration of the parsimony which they are compelled to practise. In a report dated February 3, 1921, the Committee directed special attention to the vital necessity of proper provision for library maintenance and declared that the character and efficiency of a university may be gauged by its treatment of this, its central organ, and it now characterises the expenditure on libraries and museums in 1921-22 as "dangerously small." The whole expenditure under this head was about as much as is spent on the upkeep of their libraries by the two universities of Chicago and California. The Committee is satisfied that at practically all the universities the greatest care has been taken to limit expenditure to essentials, and to get full value out of every pound spent. It follows that if the developments so urgently necessary for national efficiency are to take place, the universities' incomes must be augmented.

The discussion at the conference followed generally the lines of Dr. Adami's paper read at the Universities' Congress of 1921, and was directed especially to the question how far it is possible and desirable to obtain increases of annual grants from Local Authorities. Sir Theodore Morison suggested that provincial universities may be regarded as beneficial alike to (1) their students, (2) the cities they are located in and the surrounding districts, and (3) the nation; and that where more than two-thirds of the university's income is obtained from the students and the nation, it is not unreasonable, to look to local sources for an increase of their contribution. He adduced statistics showing that if cities which at present grant to their universities less than the produce of a penny rate, and counties and neighbouring boroughs which make grants equal to less than a halfpenny rate, were to increase their grants to these standards respectively, the English provincial universities would benefit to the extent of 55,000*l.*, or 4 per cent. of their total incomes; there are, moreover, a number of counties

and boroughs within the spheres of influence of universities which do not at present make grants to them. Nor should it be difficult to convince local bodies of the great value to their constituents of a flourishing university in their midst. The services the universities can render to local communities may not be measurable in terms of money, but are not the less substantial, among them being assistance in the scientific development of local industries and the fostering of a spirit of regional independence. General appreciation on the part of local authorities of the value of such services should go far to minimise the dangers, to which attention was directed by several speakers at the conference, of dependence on grants out of rates.

With the exception of a remark by the president of the Board of Education to the effect that he believed the race of "pious donors" is not yet extinct, no suggestion was made as to the possibility of increasing endowments. The income from endowments not appropriated to specific purposes is shown in the Grants Committee's tables to amount at present to 155,230*l.*, or 4 per cent. of the total income; the income from appropriated endowments is 215,350*l.* Several speakers acknowledged the inestimable value of the services to the universities of Sir William McCormick's Committee in helping them to meet the crisis in their finances produced by the War. The president of the Board of Education, while assuring the universities that there is at present no disposition in Parliament to challenge their autonomy, observed that they would always need to be on their guard against claims that with the extension of State aid should go extension of State control.

In opening the discussion on "Music as a University Subject," Sir Henry Hadow made a vigorous plea for full recognition by the universities of the study of musical works as being on a par with, if not a part of, literature. This recognition would involve its acceptance as an optional subject for the B.A. degree. The discussion brought to light the fact that alike in London, in Wales, and in Scotland, the recognition of music as an optional subject for matriculation is being considered, and that the northern English universities' joint matriculation board has adopted, and the Oxford and Cambridge schools examination board is considering, an adequate music syllabus for their school certificate examination.

The discussion on "The Universities and Training for Administrative and Municipal Life," opened by Sir William Beveridge, who was ably followed by Sir Josiah Stamp, showed that the liveliest interest is being taken in this subject both within and without the universities, and that this has been greatly stimulated by the establishment last year of the Institute of Public Administration. Most of the speakers were in favour of the universities providing in this connexion, not preliminary professional training, but courses suitable for persons who have already entered on their official careers. The courses would be framed in consultation with representatives of central and local government authorities with the view of junior officials being released from their ordinary duties for attendance on them.

Mr. Arthur Greenwood, M.P., spoke on "Labour and the Universities," and a paper by the Master of Balliol on extra-mural education was read.

The discussions were marked throughout by an animation which proved that the subjects were well chosen. A report of the proceedings will, we are informed, be published by the Universities' Bureau.