

Large numbers of 'Moon children' have been imported from Japan and Korea and have affronted the American public by selling candles on street corners and showering New York and Washington with posters and pamphlets, thereby violating their visa status and breaking anti-litter laws. And large numbers of young Americans have taken it all seriously (*Time*, September 30). In the summer, Moon children were to be seen praying publicly in Washington for President Nixon. Just before a Madison Square Gardens appearance they ensured that Mr Moon had a large gathering of personal guests at a banquet at the Waldorf Astoria by camping down in United Nations missions to urge attendance on the diplomats.

The money for all this comes partly from street corner sales, but Mr Moon also owns several Korean businesses, making, amongst other things, ginseng tea and guns. The industries are given to him, it is said, by businessmen converted to the cause.

It is not clear that those invited to the Third Conference are aware of the background to the organisation. The initial brochure speaks of the purpose of the conference as discussion of the role of science in relation to problems of value and a possible way of setting up a universal standard of value for all mankind. It mentions Sun Myung Moon (without the Rev.) as the inspired founder. It lists British academic advisors, although not all on the list were very pleased to have their name used in this way. But it does not say that the fundamental philosophy is anti-communist, nor that the utterances of Mr Moon are such as to leave his followers with the impression that he himself is the Third Adam or Second Messiah.

The second round of publicity contains an extensive list of speakers—62 in all—and an even more extensive list of "commentators and discussants". No less than twenty-five of those attending have the words Nobel Laureate after their name. But none of the 150 listed comes from a communist country, nor even India, whereas three come from the Republic of China (Taiwan) and five from Korea (South Korea). A random check revealed that not everyone listed had ever had the intention of going to the conference.

The conference is being organised from an office in London. Mr Moon's book *Divine Principle* occupied pride of place on the mantelpiece. Questions were answered with charm and courtesy but generally in a rather hazy way; it could hardly be said that the philosophy of the organisation came through as anything other than the most rapid of generalisations about all sciences being one, science giving us the answers to help organise society, it not being desirable to use science for destruction and there being a spiritual dimension to science.

But have you tried to get representatives from the communist half of the world? Well it is not possible to invite people from all countries every year.

Is Mr Haskell, who played such a central role two years ago, coming this year? We aren't sure of that.

Who is this Mr Moon? (His name had modestly not been mentioned in our discussion before this point.) He is a Korean philosopher who inspired these conferences.

Is he coming? We don't know.

There is an empty slot on the packed programme for a Guest Address; who will give this? We shall be looking for someone soon.

For some, of course, the aims of this conference and its background are entirely in accord with their philosophy and they can hardly be criticised for giving it their serious attention. And some who have been dissatisfied with the previous conferences have resolved to give it another try, in order to meet people, or in the hope that the foundation has tightened up its academic credentials. But many others seem to be in almost complete ignorance of the organisation behind it and unaware that their presence may be used to confer some degree of respectability on something with which they would have little sympathy.

Certainly the names of those expected to come should inspire some confidence that the operation will not be an entirely futile affair—provided they show up. But there are lingering doubts that everything is still not quite explicit, and there is an uncomfortable amount of using of names and Nobel Prizes as a means of generating momentum.

Never is an eminent scientist happier than when jetting around the world to conferences at which his eminence in one field permits him to lecture unchecked in another. One actually expressed the view that he would rather the conference had been elsewhere than in London to give him the chance for a trip. The foundation seems to have been successful in spotting two weak points of scientists—their Boeing complex and their propensity to amateur philosophising.

And a check with Mr Moon's Washington office reveals that he is indeed planning to be in London for the conference.

A hundred years ago



THE study of "seaweeds" is probably affected as much by the general public as that of fish; and whether or not the great mass of people who visit the Brighton Aquarium and other similar resorts really go there with any idea of becoming more intimately acquainted with the wonders of the deep, there is no doubt that the exhibition of varieties of ocean plants would be as popular as that of fish. A seaweed growing in water is very different from seaweed cast up on the shore, and a careful selection and arrangement of specimens would greatly enhance the interest of the tanks, while at the same time their presence would prove beneficial to the fish. We recommend the hint to the notice of the authorities of the Brighton, Crystal Palace, and Southport Aquariums.

From *Nature*, 10, 530, October 29, 1874.