

let us say, Africa—‘ a great need for Europeans who have a genuine interest and faith in Africans, and who are sufficiently free from routine tasks to be able to devote time and attention to that most important of all tasks—the building up of human relationships, for he who seeks to guide human destiny is like the man at the helm of a great ship, both requiring infinite understanding, patience and wisdom. . . . Those concerned must have an intense interest in those for whom they are working, they must have an altruistic outlook and high ideals, and they must be men and women with open minds ready to receive new ideas and perceive the course of development and direct it wisely. They may not create great wealth, they may not produce huge quantities of mass-manufactured goods, they may not build large cities, but they will do something infinitely more worth while—help in the development and growth of happy communities of human beings, happy because each is living with a sense of service to his fellows and with a sense of purpose in life.’

Dr. J. H. Oldham

DR. J. H. OLDHAM—whose resignation from the Executive Council was briefly announced in our last issue—would disclaim being the father of the Institute. The idea, he would say, was born in the minds of Dr. A. L. Warnshuis and Hanns Vischer; but Dr. Oldham quickly adopted it and nursed it into maturity. From the beginning his long experience in guiding international organizations proved invaluable. It was his influence that gained the support of the Institute’s Chairman, Lord Lugard. He was also instrumental in securing the adhesion of the Protestant missionary societies as Father Dubois secured that of the Roman Catholic congregations. At the inaugural meeting in June 1926 he was chairman of the committee which drew up the constitution; and it was he who secured the grant from the Laura Spelman Fund which made possible the foundation of the Institute. When in 1929 the Executive Council sought to enlarge the Institute’s activities by embarking upon a definite course of research it was (as Lord Lugard said) due to Dr. Oldham’s tact and the confidence placed in him by members of the Rockefeller Foundation that the necessary funds were obtained. In the course of the delicate negotiations which he conducted it was made clear that the Foundation would expect that some man ‘ with gifts of creative statesmanship and administrative ability ’ should be appointed to administer the funds. Dr. Oldham was obviously the man, and at the Council’s earnest request, he consented to divide his time between the Institute and the International Missionary Council of which he was still one of two secretaries. It should be said that as Administrative Director he received no salary, though the Institute reimbursed the I.M.C. to the extent of £100 a year for the partial loss of his services. So the Institute launched upon the Five Year Plan directed towards a better understanding of those aspects of African society making for social cohesion, the economics of communal life, the ways in which African society is being disrupted by the invasion of western ideas and economic influences, and the resulting changes in African institutions and behaviour. This involved the selection of men and women to be given research Fellowships and Studentships. In this part of his work Dr. Oldham, who laid no claim to technical competence in anthropology, relied largely upon the advice of Professor Malinowski; but all appointments were made by the Executive Council. Only those who were closely associated with Dr. Oldham can appreciate the vast amount of care he gave to the administration of this research. From 1937, when the bulk of the work was accomplished, he was able to relax from his efforts; but he continued to give the Institute the benefit of his counsel as member of the Executive Council and of the small group who carried on, as best they could, its functions during the darkest days of the war. All members of the Institute, and especially members of the Executive Council, will join with us in thanking Dr. Oldham and in wishing him to enjoy yet many years of fruitful endeavour.