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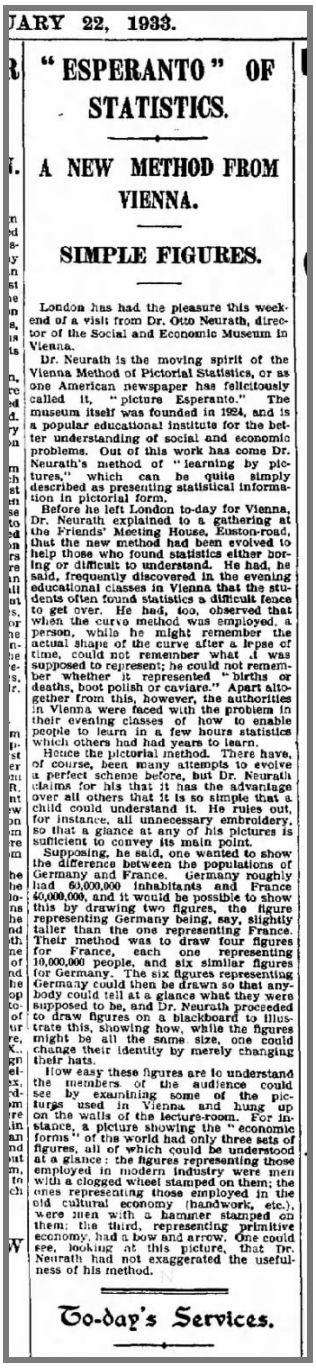

JARY 22, 1933.

"ESPERANTO" OF STATISTICS.

A NEW METHOD FROM VIENNA.

SIMPLE FIGURES.

London has had the pleasure this week-end of a visit from Dr. Otto Neurath, director of the Social and Economic Museum in Vienna.

Dr. Neurath is the moving spirit of the Vienna Method of Pictorial Statistics, or as one American newspaper has felicitously called it, "picture Esperanto." The museum itself was founded in 1924, and is a popular educational institute for the better understanding of social and economic problems. Out of this work has come Dr. Neurath's method of "learning by pictures," which can be quite simply described as presenting statistical information in pictorial form.

Before he left London to-day for Vienna, Dr. Neurath explained to a gathering at the Friends' Meeting House, Euston-road, that the new method had been evolved to help those who found statistics either boring or difficult to understand. He had, he said, frequently discovered in the evening educational classes in Vienna that the students often found statistics a difficult fence to get over. He had, too, observed that when the curve method was employed, a person, while he might remember the actual shape of the curve after a lepse of time, could not remember what it was supposed to represent; he could not remember whether it represented "births or deaths, boot polish or caviare." Apart altogether from this, however, the authorities in Vienna were faced with the problem in their evening classes of how to enable people to learn in a few hours statistics which others had had years to learn.

Hence the pictorial method. There have, of course, been many attempts to evolve a perfect scheme before, but Dr. Neurath claims for his that it has the advantage over all others that it is so simple that a child could understand it. He rules out, for instance, all unnecessary embroidery, so that a glance at any of his pictures is sufficient to convey its main point.

Supposing, he said, one wanted to show the difference between the populations of Germany and France. Germany roughly had 60,000,000 inhabitants and France 40,000,000, and it would be possible to show this by drawing two figures, the figure representing Germany being, say, slightly taller than the one representing France. Their method was to draw four figures for France, each one representing 10,000,000 people, and six similar figures for Germany. The six figures representing Germany could then be drawn so that anybody could tell at a glance what they were supposed to be, and Dr. Neurath proceeded to draw figures on a blackboard to illustrate this, showing how, while the figures might be all the same size, one could change their identity by merely changing their hats.

How easy these figures are to understand the members of the audience could see by examining some of the pictures used in Vienna and hung up on the walls of the lecture-room. For instance, a picture showing the "economic forms" of the world had only three sets of figures, all of which could be understood at a glance: the figures representing those employed in modern industry were men with a clogged wheel stamped on them; the ones representing those employed in the old cultural economy (handwork, etc.), were men with a hammer stamped on them; the third, representing primitive economy, had a bow and arrow. One could see, looking at this picture, that Dr. Neurath had not exaggerated the usefulness of his method.

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