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Science News Letter, September 11, 1948

GENERAL SCIENCE

Research Center in Congo

A \$9,000,000 institute for scientific work will study human, animal, and vegetable life in the Belgian Congo. Research in field has already begun.

► THE CREATION in the Belgian Congo of a new \$9,000,000 institute for general scientific research was announced in a preliminary report released through Dr. Harlow Shapley, Director of the Harvard College Observatory.

It will be open to the scientists from all parts of the world and it will specialize on problems of the tropics. Its initial endowment of \$9,000,000 will be supplemented by an annual subsidy of more than half a million dollars.

The international character of the new institute is emphasized through the appointment by the Belgian government of Dr. Shapley, Dr. E. B. Worthington, British biologist, and Prof. A. Chevalier, French botanist, to the Board of Administrators. The director of the new scientific foundation is Dr. Louis van den Berghe, Professor at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp and Visiting Professor of Tropical Medicine at Tulane University.

The purpose of IRSAC (Institut pour la Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale), according to a statement submitted by Dr. van den Berghe, is the fundamental study of the tropical environment, human, zoological, and botanical.

Several research stations will be erected in the Congo during the next two years. The main one will probably be on the high plateau region between Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika. A second station will be erected before the end of this year in the Province of the Equator, not far from the mouth of the Congo. A third will be in southeastern Katanga. Two additional stations, one in the east and another in the west, are planned for seismologic and ionospheric measurements.

Field work has been started already on social and physical anthropology, climatology, nutrition, hydrobiology, geology, plant and animal ecology. A party is in the field searching for a most suitable site for a high altitude astronomical observatory.

IRSAC will provide fellowships and subsidies to the scientists for work in the Congo, Dr. Shapley explained. Its aim is to coordinate and inspire the various scientific institutions and services in the Congo. It will also have its own scientific and technical staff, and will act as an agency of information for visiting scientists to the Congo and provide them with material help and various facilities for their explorations and researches. Work tables and other

facilities will be kept at the disposal of Belgian and foreign scientific institutions in the different stations of IRSAC.

The institution will assemble an important and appropriate library at its main station. American scientific institutions able to contribute current and past publications to the library are being asked to address them to IRSAC, Costermansville, Belgian Congo.

Dr. van den Berghe, director of IRSAC, is already established at Costermansville, on Lake Kivu in the high mountainous region of the Eastern Congo. In 1946 he was for three months a Visiting Lecturer with the Harvard Medical School. In 1935 he had been an Advanced Fellow at Harvard under the Belgian-American Foundation.

The Belgian Congo offers much virgin territory for explorations by scientists and affords also a wide variety of conditions, varying from equatorial jungles to mountains that rise above the tree line. On the high plateaus in the regions of the great lakes and the Kivu Mountains, Europeans can live with comfort, even though but a few degrees south of the equator. Around Lake Kivu there are extensive agriculture developments, with coffee, grain, pyrethrum, and cotton among the products.

The Belgian Congo is especially suited to new researches in anthropology. Among the native tribes of the region are the pygmies, as well as the "giants" that live east of Lake Kivu, near Tanganyika.

The Congo is famous for its radium deposits, and it is one of the most important sources of uranium ores.

The president of the board of administrators of IRSAC is Prof. E. deBruyne of the University of Ghent. He was formerly Minister of Colonies in the Belgian Government. Among the administrators are many of the most distinguished scientists and educators of Belgium, representing among other fields, geology, biochemistry, astronomy, mining, engineering, ethnology, sociology, veterinary medicine, physics, agronomy and paleontology.

Although no scientific journal will be maintained by IRSAC, a scientific report, with abstracts of the papers published elsewhere by the members and guests of IRSAC, will appear annually and will be distributed widely among scientific institutions of the world.

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ELECTRONIC BALL PARK—This is a "photoelectric tube" designed to measure the speed of electrons knocked loose from an element of invisible ultraviolet light. Using a beam of ultraviolet light as a "bat," General Electric scientists knock electrons from an element suspended in the sphere's center, and measure the speed with which they hit the "outfield," the sphere's inner surface. As few as 6,000 electrons per second can be detected hitting the "outfield."

PLANT PHYSIOLOGY

2,4-D Makes Roots Grow From Leaves of Bean Plant

► A WEED-KILLING CHEMICAL can make roots grow out of garden beans, from a part of the bean which usually produces leaves instead of roots.

The weed-killer, 2,4-D, can cause roots to grow from the infant leaves inside the bean, Ernest K. Akamine of the University of Hawaii reports in the journal, *SCIENCE* (Aug. 27). He believes that this is the first reported instance of such growth.

The cotyledon part in the bean that forms the first leaves on the plant, may survive the effect of 2,4-D which kills the rest of the bean. When it does it puts out roots. However, when the rooted cotyledon is transferred to normal soil without any 2,4-D in it, no shoots develop.

Experiments in which beans were put in glass dishes instead of in soil showed that many different concentrations of 2,4-D will make roots grow from the cotyledon. Only one case was found of a cotyledon which sprouted roots without 2,4-D.

Previous research has shown that 2,4-D can also produce unusual root growths in corn.

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