

GENERAL SCIENCE

Venezuela's Manpower

A rapidly expanding technology, spurred by discovery of immense natural resources, has created a problem for Venezuela: the lack of adequately trained manpower.

By HOWARD SIMONS
from Venezuela

► A PRESENT-DAY PROBLEM plaguing this nation points up a current world ailment that may develop into a chronic disease.

Rich in two major resources, oil and iron ore, Venezuela is poor in a third, scientific manpower.

Not too unlike its neighbor to the north, the United States, Venezuela's current manpower shortage has been brought about by a rapidly expanding technology.

In this respect it is a symbol of what could happen in many other nations of today's world. Seemingly dormant for centuries, material wealth is uncovered and overnight a nation is transformed from a "have-not" country into a "have" nation. All too often, however, where money and materials are available, manpower is lacking.

Then, like any other raw material, it must be imported or developed within the country. The first solution is quick. The second takes a long time. Venezuela is currently using both methods.

Dr. Dario Parra, minister of education, told SCIENCE SERVICE that it is impossible to foresee an end to the importation of foreign scientists and technologists at the present. Even if Venezuela thought it had enough for a moment, he explained, its economy is expanding so fast there would be another shortage in just a few years.

At the same time, Dr. Parra pointed out, more and more Venezuelan students are enrolling as science students in the nation's universities. So strong has the attraction to science been in the past few years that, for the first time in Venezuela's history, the number of engineering students at the University of Caracas, the country's largest, now outnumber the traditional leading subjects, law and medicine.

At the University of Caracas in 1954, there were 888 engineering students, compared to 1,289 medical students. This year, there are 1,320 engineering students, compared to 1,260 medical students.

The emphasis is not being put on higher education alone, Dr. Parra said. Science training is being stepped-up throughout Venezuela's primary and secondary schools.

To solve a parallel shortage of properly trained teachers, a new law was passed this year to permit teachers to obtain a graduate degree through correspondence courses.

Dr. Parra said that although "one type of study should not be neglected to the advantage of another, the trend towards more science students is very advantageous for our nation at this particular time."

Venezuelan Ladies Fed

► LADIES are being fed a special diet in Venezuela.

If they like their fare, they will be bred in large numbers and then unleashed to prey on a similar, but natural diet throughout the countryside.

The ladies in question are lady beetles. They are being bred and groomed in captivity at the Center of Agricultural Investigations, Maracay, for use as natural insecticides.

Lady beetles, explained Dr. Fernando Kern, head of the Center's department of pests and diseases, feed on aphids, cutworms, cotton leaf worms and other injurious pests. If they can be bred in captivity in large numbers, they can be set out in farms to help control the damaging insects they feed on.

To breed them, Dr. Kern has concocted a special diet rich in vitamins and hormones. It is a liver extract from fresh liver that has been enriched with vitamins and hormones, frozen, sugared, and unfrozen.

The lady beetles appear to relish their man-made diet. Experiments show that they already have doubled their egg output.

Science News Letter, December 15, 1956

The leading cause of fires in buildings in 1955 was careless smoking and matches, 122,000 fires.

About one in every three families in the U. S. owns a dog and one out of five owns a cat.

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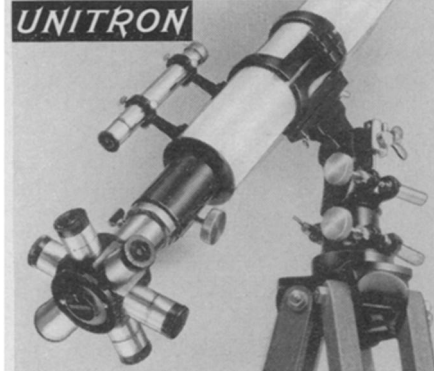
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