

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN BRITISH COLONIAL TERRITORIES

THE survey "The Colonial Territories (1950-51)"*, as in previous years, provides much of the background against which the value of the work of the Colonial Research Council and like bodies is best appreciated; the present report includes a chapter on research and surveys which summarizes progress reported more fully in "Colonial Research, 1950-51". Meanwhile, the establishment during the year of a Scientific Council for Africa South of the Sahara, which held its first meeting in Nairobi in November, is noted, and also the holding in June of a review conference to survey the work of the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux Organization. Progress in starting the work of the various Colonial fishery stations and institutes continues to be hampered by the shortage of qualified staff, and special stress is laid on the opening of the Sugar Technology Laboratory at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture. The Colonial Products Advisory Bureau completed ninety-five laboratory investigations and dealt with 672 inquiries. The year saw the formal opening on January 31 of the West African Institute for Trypanosomiasis Research, with laboratories and installations at Kadua and Vorn in Northern Nigeria. Construction of a central Trypanosomiasis Research Institute in East Africa has been agreed upon by the East African Governments and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and it is expected that the whole of the capital expenditure and about 50 per cent of the recurrent expenditure for the first five years will be met from the Colonial Development and Welfare vote.

Although details of the actual scientific work are reserved for the report on "Colonial Research", major developments are appropriately reviewed in the wider context of the present report. This review thus helps to correct some of the criticism which is directed against British Colonial policy; that is also true of other activities of direct interest to the scientific worker which are recorded in the chapter on "The Social Services". Educational developments are discussed elsewhere, but reference may appropriately be made here to the developments recorded in mass education, which show how the organization of government is being adjusted to fit in with the new conception of community development, notably in Kenya, Uganda and West Africa. Where the formation of community development departments or appointment of community development officers has led to village communities being encouraged to co-operate in numerous small projects to prevent flooding or desiccation of the land, reclaim land, construct buildings, eradicate hookworm or roundworm, much has been done to improve the welfare of the community. Steady progress is reported in the medical and health services, and as general standards of public health improve it is becoming easier to select for attention in a particular territory those diseases which have the greatest social and economic significance. On January 1, 1951, there were, however, still 160 vacancies for medical practitioners in Colonial territories, the need being particularly urgent

in West Africa and Malaya. The development of health centres in urban and rural areas is gaining in popularity and proving effective. The mobile maritime dispensary service in Sarawak was augmented, and marked success was achieved by the mobile health unit serving twenty-five villages in a remote part of Cyprus. Medical field units, or epidemic control units, which deal with endemic diseases of all kinds in their areas, and also when necessary with epidemics of smallpox, cerebrospinal meningitis, relapsing fever and trypanosomiasis, have been evolved in West Africa from the former Sleeping Sickness Control Units, and their scope has recently been extended to include health surveys.

Arrangements were made during the year with the Pasteur Institute in Paris for freeze-dried B.C.G. vaccine to be supplied to all Colonial territories which require it, but much research is required before the value of universal B.C.G. vaccination can be finally assessed. On the whole, very satisfactory results have been obtained in the treatment of leprosy with sulphone preparations, particularly with diphenyl sulphone.

In the field of malaria, an international conference held in Uganda in November-December under the joint auspices of the World Health Organization and the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa made apparent the important contribution in research which could be made in British Colonial territories. At Ibaro in Nigeria the effect of residual spraying in a hyper-endemic area is being carefully studied; a campaign in British Honduras was intensified, when spraying of about 98 per cent of the dwelling houses in the Colony with an emulsion of DDT was completed, and the first phase of the Mauritius eradication scheme—spraying of houses with residual insecticide—was also completed during the year. Increased attention was given to the control of onchocerciasis in African territories—for example, by attacking the small biting fly (*Simulium*) which carries the disease—and it is hoped to eradicate the fly from that part of the Nile where work is in progress on the Uganda hydro-electric scheme by aerial spraying with DDT.

As regards subordinate staff, the main emphasis is still on the training of hospital assistants, male and female nurses, and health inspectors; but laboratory technicians and pharmacists are also being trained and the development of specialist services is accompanied by some specialization in training. Owing to staffing difficulties, Colonial territories could not take full advantage of the offer of the National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, and only two of the six scholarships for training in tuberculosis work in Great Britain were awarded.

Organized efforts to improve nutrition are an essential part of the campaign for raising the level of health, and a feature of practical nutrition programmes is the increased use of food-yeast. Reference is also made in this report to the important part played by broadcasting in education and in assisting the understanding of public affairs, and to the invaluable work in these territories of the British Council. The dependence of social welfare and social services on economic development is made clear, and the report is as useful a contribution to the discussion of economic or political developments in these territories as it is to the consideration of the scientific or technical work which is reviewed more fully elsewhere.

* Colonial Office. The Colonial Territories (1950-51). (Cmd. 8243.) Pp. ix+184. (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1951.) 4s. 6d. net.