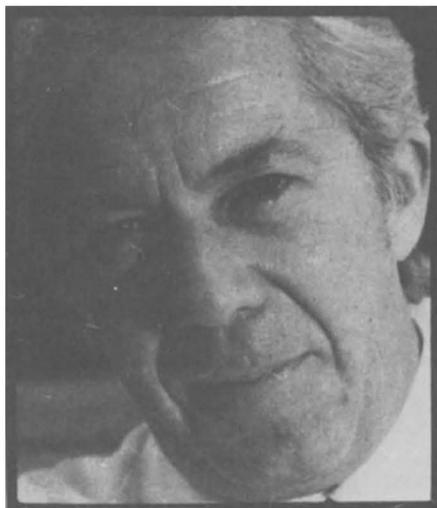


The International Institute of Cellular and Molecular Pathology (above) was inaugurated as a centre for medical research last April. Christian de Duve (below) is president of its governing body as well as chairman of the executive committee and in those capacities he directs the activities of the ICP. The institute is already acting as a honey-pot for expatriate Belgian scientists but it is de Duve's problem to try and make the institute live up to its 'International' intent. Peter Newmark reports from Brussels.



THE ICP will probably be international before it is truly national, having been born out of the long standing Belgian failure to integrate the French and Flemish-speaking communities. Separatist movements at the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL) triggered off such disruptions in 1968 that co-existence on one campus became impossible. It was during the ensuing upheaval that the idea of the ICP arose, along with a government plan to found a separate French-speaking UCL on Walloon territory. The outcome of subsequent deliberations was a brand new campus in a Brussels suburb. On this campus are sited a 900-bed hospital, the new UCL medical school and the ICP.

In spite of the very close links between the ICP and the medical school, including the fact that all the senior members of the former hold chairs at the UCL, the institute aspires to autonomy, and is well on the way to it. Thus it is registered as an independent body, has its own charter and governing body and maintains a Scientific Advisory Board of international notables who are consulted before any important appointments are made. (Advice in the negative from them has already been followed on occasion.) In addition the official language of the ICP is English.

All research at the ICP is intended to be medically orientated but with

some categorisation into basic and applied projects. The organisation is described, perhaps more for the benefit of laymen and fund-raising than for experienced scientists, as consisting of a central core of basic scientists on to which are attached groups that are tackling more applied problems—the promised advantage being that many diverse groups can obtain adequate basic support from the multiple skills of the core.

So far the majority of the staff, at present numbering about 150 including supporting personnel, belong to the 'central core'. They divide into four main groups. Largest by far is de Duve's biochemistry group which concentrates its work on subcellular particles and the metabolism of both glycogen (under H. G. Hers) and connective tissue (under G. Vaes). The experimental medicine group is the next largest. Led by J. F. Heremans, it provides the immunological know-how of the ICP and has an active interest in various proteins of body fluids. Third, there is a general pathology group operating in the field of endocrinology, particularly thyroid hormones, under M. de Visscher. And finally there is C. Cocito's small microbiology and molecular genetics group. Each of these four groups was located separately until the ICP united them and each is very enthusiastic about its new brotherhood.

But what of the new groups that de Duve is hoping to graft in to, or preferably on to, the existing 'central core'? So far a large grant from a French drug company has enabled A. Trouet to set up an experimental chemotherapy unit, T. Boon is about to join the institute to start up a cellular genetics group that will concentrate on teratocarcinomas and there are advanced plans for a parasitology group backed by the WHO.

Noticeable at this stage largely for their absence are any new clinically orientated research groups. Since these are part not only of the design but also of the justification of the ICP, they will have to be started in due course. The main question that concerns de Duve at present is whether he can find suitable staff to originate and run new groups.

In his favour are the fine facilities of the ICP, the permanent posts that can be offered and the fact that de Duve (no hand-waggoner himself) is prepared to back almost any line of medical research provided he finds the right person. Against him is the considerable problem of attracting the foreign candidates that de Duve is after.

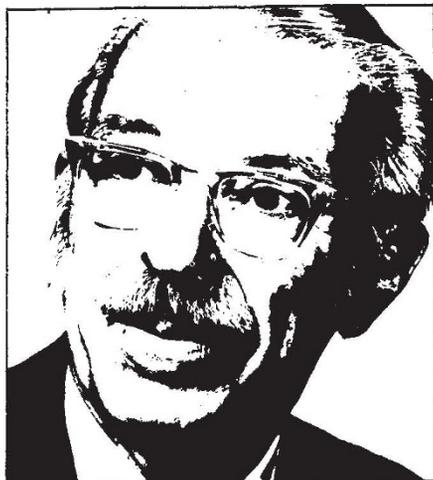
Why look for foreigners? In the first place there simply are not enough top-class Belgian scientists: second, there is the 'International' label to live up to. But over and above those reasons is de Duve's profound belief in the value of mobility among scientists. This belief is nurtured by de Duve's long association with the Rockefeller Institute where he spends about half his time and will continue to do so. In fact, the Rockefeller clearly plays a godparent role to the ICP, acting as a general model, having been a temporary home for most of the senior staff at one time or another and providing two of the members of the Scientific Advisory Board.

Also in line with de Duve's encouragement of mobility will be his policy of only giving tenured posts to the most senior of newly appointed staff. Others will be taken on limited appointments of a few years, some on a fellowship programme that is about to start.

It remains to be seen how successful this policy will be at a time when even the best young scientists are not prepared to take untenured posts except as a last resort.

Professor de Duve is a modest man, courageous enough to try and build up an international institute in a city which, apart from becoming the Washington of the European Economic Community, has few outstanding attractions. His Nobel Prize last year has not only brought him fame and fortune but has been an exceptionally timely boost for the ICP. □

THOMAS JUKES



Evolutionists brought to book

THIS year is the fiftieth anniversary of the "Scopes Trial" in Dayton, Tennessee, when the issue of teaching evolution was argued between William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow. The trial was showbiz, not, as some have thought, a public martyrdom of Scopes. It was put "on the air" in one of the first coast-to-coast network radio broadcasts. Scopes was fined \$100, this was paid by the *Baltimore Sun*, and Scopes left Tennessee to accept a graduate fellowship (a rarity in those days!) offered because of his new fame. The evolutionists got their story to the public. At the time, it seemed that Bryan succeeded in convicting the defendant but that Darrow triumphed ideologically. Half a century later, the story of the trial, as told by H. L. Mencken, sounds archaic to the young, and nostalgic to their parents.

But there is an uneasy feeling that, as far as school textbooks in the USA are concerned, evolutionists may have won the battle of Dayton, but not the war. For publishers live by selling books, and it is poor for business when parents object to a science textbook: the competition would gladly omit "controversial material" to win the contract. As an "evaluator" for the California State Textbook Commission, I was prepared to resist the opponents of evolution on the State Board of Education. I found, however, that there was very little mention of evolution in the books. Publishers will not prepare a special "California edition", so the result is that the national versions have little to say about the subject, with the notable exception which Professor G. G. Simpson has noted, of those published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. □

The "textbooks" published by the Creation Science Research Center of San Diego have plenty to say, however. Much of their content is artfully directed towards attempts to discredit geological findings and isotopic dating. Few physicists, palaeontologists and geologists wish to get into arguments emanating from those who truly believe in a special creation that took place instantaneously 6,000 years ago. But I think we may learn a simplified approach from the following famous exchange in the Scopes trial:

DARROW: Mr Bryan, do you believe that the first woman was Eve?

BRYAN: Yes.

DARROW: Do you believe that she was literally made out of Adam's rib?

BRYAN: I do.

DARROW: Did you ever discover where Cain got his wife?

BRYAN: No sir; I leave the agnostics to hunt for her.

Fifty years later, creationists are passing the hat for the latest of their expeditions to look for the remains of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat. Surely if they wish to argue about geology, we are entitled to ask a few questions about the Ark, its dimensions, and the time schedule of the Flood. These are set forth with great precision in the Book of Genesis, in an account which also contains one of the most cherished of allegories—that of the dove of peace.

Our creationist friends, literal and unimaginative, are more concerned with looking for pieces of wood. Very well. Let us ask them a few questions about ecology in its most compact form—the living quarters on the Ark for all terrestrial species (including koala bears, *Plasmodia*, tapeworms and tigers), plus their food supply and maintenance for 400 days, in a volume of 44 000 m³. There is also the minor question of what happened to about 1.6 × 10⁹ km³ of water when the flood receded. This much water would be needed to cover the Earth to a depth of 3,000 m, an increase in water level that would be actually only about half that required to submerge and drown "every living substance . . . which was upon the face of the ground."

But I digress. In some religious sects, there is still a zealous opposition to teaching evolution, and the effects of this have been recently visible in the states of California, Texas and Washington. The subject of evolution is one of our great cultural heritages, which has now expanded to encompass biology in a single network of molecules, and the recent problems in the USA are a lesson to all of us to keep up-to-date on knowledge of the fossil record and the methods of isotopic dating of rocks. □