

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

AN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR PORTO RICO

A NEWS bulletin of Science Service calls attention to the circumstance that President Hoover's visit to Porto Rico may revive interest in the establishment of a graduate school of tropical agriculture on the island, a project in which Governor Theodore Roosevelt is greatly interested. Pointing to the achievements of the school of tropical medicine which was established on the island in cooperation with Columbia University, Governor Roosevelt states his belief that Porto Rico is peculiarly fitted to become a great center for Pan-American research and learning.

Cornell University, in whose school of agriculture many Porto Rican boys have studied, is particularly interested in the proposed graduate tropic-agricultural school, and is expected to cooperate in its founding and maintenance. The National Research Council some years ago recommended such an institution. Subsequently members of the committee of biology and agriculture of the council visited Porto Rico and unanimously decided that it would be the logical place to establish such a school.

There is at present a good department of agriculture in the University of Porto Rico, graduates of which are more and more in demand in South American countries for special consultant and advisory work.

In 1926, Commissioner Carlos E. Chardon went to Colombia to make a survey for the agricultural school at Medellin, and, following the publication of his report, Colombia asked three graduates of the Porto Rico University to come there as teachers. Later an agricultural experiment station was built and equipped in the Department of Valle del Cauca in Colombia under Porto Rican guidance, and two former directors of the Porto Rican Agricultural Experiment Station were offered good consultant positions with sugar companies in Cuba, Santo Domingo and Peru.

Another result of the agricultural expedition to the Cauca Valley was a large collection of parasitic flora and the publication of a pamphlet called "Myological Explorations of Colombia," which is in great demand among botanists.

Last year Ecuador sent its director of agriculture, Dr. Abelardo Pachano, a Cornell graduate, to Porto Rico to study agricultural research and experimentation. Dr. Pachano took two Porto Rican university agricultural graduates back with him to Ecuador. Venezuela, Panama and Peru have also offered positions to Porto Rican specialists in agriculture.

Because of the Spanish culture, language and tradition in the lives of Porto Ricans, Governor Roosevelt holds that the islanders are admirably adapted to act as intermediaries between the United States and South American countries on diplomatic missions. A still firmer basis of international understanding can be brought about, he believes, through help such as Porto Ricans now are rendering to South American countries along scientific lines.

For that reason, Governor Roosevelt hopes that the graduate tropic agricultural school on the island sponsored by Cornell University may soon become a reality. Soil possibilities of many of these south and central American countries are so varied that the day may well come when a wide variety of northern fruits and vegetables will be produced for home consumption in the tropics, as well as coffee, tobacco, pineapples and other tropical foods for export.

VIRGIN FOREST LANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

THE area of virgin forest lands in territory now within continental boundaries of the United States was approximately 800,000,000 acres at the time Columbus came to America and is now less than 100,000,000 acres, according to estimates made available on March 10 by the Forest Service and summarized in the *U. S. Daily*.

By far the greater portion of the decrease is attributable to clearings made to provide acreage for farms, particularly in the eastern section of the country. The area cleared to make way for agricultural operations since the beginning of the twentieth century is comparatively small, it was pointed out.

The estimates represent results of efforts to obtain the closest possible approximations in the face of absence of conclusive data, it was emphasized.

The total area of forest land in the United States, exclusive of Alaska, reached by forest fires in 1929 was 46,230,120 acres. Of this total 4,876,320 acres were located in protected areas while 4,353,800 acres on which fires occurred were not within sections over which organization for protection against fire has been established. The total amount of forest lands needing protection against fire is estimated by the Forest Service at 589,809,240 acres. Approximately two thirds of this acreage is protected.

A compilation made in 1923, showing little need for revision in later years, placed the amount of timber affected by the presence of insects at 9,000,000,000 board feet. This estimate includes not only the trees killed by bark beetles and defoliating in-