THE CANAL ZONE BIOLOGICAL AREA

THE trustees of the Canal Zone Biological Area held their annual meeting in the building of the National Academy of Sciences on June 12. Among other things they took action to enlarge the availability of the area's Barro Colorado Island to industrial research laboratories and others interested in research or testing under tropical conditions.

The Canal Zone Biological Laboratory is an agency set up by the Congress to administer Barro Colorado Island in Gatun Lake and other tropical areas which may be designated as permanent primeval sites for biological and other research. The directors are the president of the National Academy of Sciences, *Chairman;* the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, *Vice-chairman;* the Secretaries of War, Interior and Agriculture, and three distinguished biologists appointed by the president of the academy. At present these latter are Dr. Thomas Barbour, Harvard University; Dr. E. D. Merrill, director of Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University; and Dr. Remington Kellogg, of the U. S. National Museum.

Barro Colorado Island is a large island of virgin tropical forest in Gatun Lake which is rich in species of tropical flora and fauna. Originally it was a hilly section of the forest which became an island when the lake was formed. It is unique in that while it is a wild tropical jungle it is easily accessible to the facilities of modern cities.

From the day it was formed Barro Colorado has been preserved and used as a tropical laboratory—first under private auspices and later as a government monument set aside by Act of Congress in order to preserve its unique characteristics. It is equipped with laboratories and living quarters and is within twenty minutes by boat of a station on the Panama Railroad.

While set aside primarily for biological research, other kinds of research and testing under humid tropical conditions have been carried on. This has been particularly the case during the war period. The work has ranged from problems of deterioration of equipment, clothing and packaged goods under tropical conditions, to those of sound and radio transmission in tropical jungles.

These experiences have satisfied the directors that a certain amount of such work can be continued regularly in connection with the primary purpose for which the area was established. They have consequently authorized setting aside a small area near the laboratory for such use. Information as to the conditions governing such work can be obtained by writing to the office of the Canal Zone Biological Area, care of the National Academy of Sciences, 2101 Constitution Avenue, Washington 25, D. C., or to that of the executive officer, Dr. Alexander Wetmore, Smithsonian Institution, Washington 25, D. C.

THE ISOTOPE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

A CONFERENCE of research workers interested in the use of carbon isotopes for biochemical and biological studies was held on June 19 and 20 at the Lankenau Hospital Research Institute in Philadelphia.

On the first day reports of current work in this field were presented by Major Allan Hemingway and by Drs. E. A. Evans, D. Rittenberg, D. W. Wilson, M. Cohn, G. Medes, S. Weinhouse and M. D. Kamen. Descriptions and demonstrations of the latest developments in the production, concentration and measurement of the carbon isotopes were presented by Drs. A. O. Nier, J. R. Dunning and A. Reid (Columbia University).

The second day was devoted to a discussion of the available facilities for carrying on biochemical studies. The afternoon was spent at the laboratories of the Houdry Process Corporation of Pennsylvania at Marcus Hook to inspect their mass spectrometer and their thermal diffusion plant for concentration of C–13.

A national committee was formed for the purpose of sponsoring and aiding biochemical research with carbon and other isotopes by institutions and responsible individuals. The Isotope Research Committee consists of a biological and a physical section. The latter is to act primarily in an advisory capacity to the biological section.

The members of the sections are as follows:

Biological Section

D. W. Wilson, *Chairman,* University of Pennsylvania
E. A. Evans, University of Chicago
A. B. Hastings, Harvard University
A. Hemingway, University of Minnesota
M. D. Kamen, Washington University
G. Medes, Lankenau Hospital Research Institute
D. Rittenberg, Columbia University
V. du Vigneaud, Cornell University
S. Weinhouse, Houdry Process Corporation of Pennsylvania
G. H. Werkman, Iowa State College

Physical and Chemical Section

A. O. Nier, *Chairman,* University of Minnesota*
E. J. Booth, Columbia University
J. R. Dunning, Columbia University
A. V. Grosse, Houdry Process Corporation of Pennsylvania

The secretary of both committees is Dr. Stanley P. Reimann, of the Lankenau Hospital Research Institute.

It was agreed that a symposium, covering both the physical and biological aspects, would be particularly useful at the present time and that another meeting be held within the next year to see what progress has been made.

* At present at the War Research Laboratories of Columbia University.