Meetings

International Biological Program

On 21–22 May, at Morges, Switzerland, a program of cooperative research in basic biology on an international scale was outlined by a planning committee organized for this purpose by the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU). Two years of preliminary discussions by members of ICSU and three of its affiliated unions—the International Union of Biological Sciences, the International Union of Biochemistry, and the International Union of Physiological Sciences—had convinced these scientists that there is a genuine need for such a program. These discussions had further emphasized the fact that, although biologists might derive inspiration and encouragement from the success of a program such as the International Geophysical Year, a large-scale program of intensive research, highly concentrated in a small period of time, is not practicable in the biological sciences. Biology is so vast in scope and affects so many facets of human life that it could not possibly be covered in a single coordinated effort. Consequently, the committee appointed by ICSU decided not to attempt to organize a single "International Biological Year" comparable to the IGY.

On the other hand the biologists brought together at Morges by ICSU, both during preliminary discussions and at the meeting itself, became increasingly aware of the need for an international biological program of a somewhat different nature. This need arises from the fact that many problems of vital importance to man's future welfare can be solved only by means of new scientific information. Such knowledge can be acquired best through coordinated research in basic biological science on an international scale. Problems requiring such an international approach have arisen chiefly through the sudden changes in his environment which man has produced in recent years, and through the spectacular growth of human populations and the advance of civilization. These problems include man's catastrophic transformation of natural communities of living organisms, which often has greatly reduced their productivity; the need for greatly increasing the productivity of living communities all over the world, to keep up with the earth's growing population; the physiological stresses to which people are exposed because of their rapidly changing ways of life; and the changes in genetic constitution of human populations caused in part by the rapid advance of civilization.

As an aid in solving these problems, the Planning Committee at Morges outlined a series of interrelated projects, for each of which a detailed program of research will be prepared by a small subcommittee of scientists carefully selected by the Planning Committee on the basis of their high degree of competence in the field of the project concerned. Under the general title "The Biological Basis of Productivity and Human Welfare," specific projects will be organized. Three projects will deal with the biological productivity of terrestrial communities. The first will devote its efforts to a general survey of terrestrial communities. The second will study the metabolism of terrestrial communities, with emphasis on photosynthesis, the nitrogen cycle, and the physiological interrelationships between organisms. A third project will seek methods of conserving terrestrial communities and increasing their productivity.

In addition, there will be a project devoted to fresh-water communities and another, to the biological resources of marine communities.

A group of physiologists and geneticists in the field of human biology, working in collaboration with each other, will study the biological basis of human adaptibility, both physiological and genetical.

The size and scope of these projects, as well as their duration, will be worked out by the subcommittees, which are now being appointed by the Planning Committee.

G. Montalenti, of the University of Rome, convenor of the Planning Committee, expressed great satisfaction with the outcome of the conference. He announced that detailed plans for each of the proposed projects should be ready for consideration by the Central Planning Committee early in 1963. The plans will then be submitted to biologists in all of the nations adhering to ICSU for further revision, together with requests for financial support and for cooperation in organizing the actual teams of research workers.

Similar optimism was expressed by other members of the Planning Committee. The International Council of Scientific Unions was represented on the committee by its vice president, S. Hörstadius (Uppsala, Sweden) and by F. W. G. Baker, who acted as secretary of the conference. Representing the International Union of Biological Sciences were its president, C. H. Waddington (Edinburgh, United Kingdom); its general secretary, G. L. Stebbins (Davis, California); Jean Baer (Neuchâtel, Switzerland), of its division of zoology; and D. Steinberg (Leningrad, U.S.S.R.). The International Union of Biochemistry was represented by its president, M. Florkin (Liège, Belgium); the International Union of Physiological Sciences, by J. S. Weiner (Oxford, England); and the International Union of Geography, by H. Boesch (Zürich, Switzerland).

Although the research to be carried out under the international biological program will be entirely in fields of basic biology, it will be oriented toward solving practical problems of human welfare. For this reason the conference was attended by the following consultants: S. J. Holt, representing the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; R. L. Dobson, of the World Health Organization; and H. Seligman, representing the International Atomic Energy Association. The advice of consultants from these organizations will be frequently sought by members of the subcommittees for each project.

Great interest in the program has been expressed by the officials of UNESCO, whose representative, A. Kepes, attended the conference. Their cooperation is assured, particularly in those aspects of the program which involve the training of additional research workers to carry on the work of the projects.

Because of the importance of the

program for the conservation of natural communities throughout the world, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) acted as host for the conference, which was held at its headquarters, Les Uttins, at Morges. The IUCN was represented at the conference by Jean Baer, its president, and by two consultants, E. M. Nicholson (London) and E. H. Graham (Washington, D.C.). Its fine hospitality and the stimulating atmosphere which it provided gave great impetus to the work of the Planning Committee.

At the conclusion of the session, G. Laclavère, treasurer of ICSU, discussed with the conference members his experiences with the planning stages of the International Geophysical Year and made many helpful comments on procedure. He expressed great satisfaction with the work accomplished by the committee.

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Forthcoming Events

October

7–10. Society of **Petroleum Engineers**, Los Angeles, Calif. (SPF, 345 E. 47 St., New York 17)

7–13. **Cardiology**, intern. congr., Mexico City, Mexico. (I. Costero, Instituto Nacional de Cardiologia, Ave. Cuauhtemoc 300, Mexico 7, D.F.)

8–10. **Electronics**, natl. conf., Chicago, Ill. (National Electronics Conf., 228 N. La Salle St., Chicago 1)

8–11. **Allergy**, congr., Basel, Switzerland. (R. Schuppli, c/o Dermatologische Universitäts-Klinik, Basel)

8–11. **Infectious Pathology**, intern. congr., Bucharest, Rumania. (N. Cajal, Str. Dumbrava, Rossie 23, Bucharest)

8–11. **Otorhinolaryngology**, congr., Paris, France. (H. Guillon, French Soc. of Otorhinolaryngology, 6 Avenue MacMahon, Paris 17°)

8–11. **Water Pollution Control** Federation, annual, Toronto, Canada. (R. E. Fuhrman, Executive Secretary, WPCF, 4435 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington 16, D.C.)

8–12. American Soc. of **Civil Engineers**, Detroit, Mich. (W. H. Wisely, 345 E. 47 St., New York 17)

8–12. Industrial **Forestry**, seminar, St. Paul, Minn. (Z. W. White, Yale School of Forestry, 205 Prospect St., New Haven 11, Conn.)

8–12. **Instruments** and Research Equipment, symp. and exhibit, Bethesda, Md. (L. Heiss, American Instrument Co., Inc., 8030 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, Md.)

8–12. **Lead** and **Radiation Shielding Problems**, intern. conf., London, England. (J. Oldroyd, Lead Development Assoc., 34 Berkeley Square, London, W.1)

8–13. Treatment and Storage of **High-**