

such storms at the same time of year invites comparisons. The similarities lie not only in the season but in the scale of damage to parks and gardens, with estimates of tree loss as high as 1,000 in some estates. The major difference is that the 1881 storm spread its effects over a much wider area, with severe damage reported from London, Warwickshire, Norfolk, and south-east Scotland.

It is very difficult at this stage to learn any lessons from the recent storm, other than the need to be philosophical about such natural phenomena. It is doubtful whether the increased planting of shelter-belts, for example, is justified, as it was noticeable that some of the most severe destruction occurred within apparently sheltered woodland areas. Certainly at Wisley, plantings in the new arboretum, less than 10 years old and on a slope that was completely open to the south, suffered much less than did areas of more or

less mature woodland, both within and outside the Garden.

As to the future, it is to be hoped that the positive aspects of such an event can be exploited to the full. There are clearly greater opportunities for replanting in many well-established gardens than there have been for very many years. It is to be hoped that this task will not be rushed into headlong; for it is the plantings that are carried out over the next few years that will, storms permitting, form the landscapes of future centuries.

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Towards a University of the Mediterranean?

In May 1983 a Conference on Scientific Cooperation among the Universities of the Mediterranean Sea was held in Bari, Italy, in order to assess the possibilities for their cooperation in scientific and humanistic research. The choice of the University of Bari for this Conference revives a centuries-old tradition which has made Bari and environs a focal region of contact between the different areas of the Mediterranean. A commitment involving scientific and cultural cooperation among the Universities of the Mediterranean Sea, each with its own particular cultural history, was considered to be the most suitable means of rediscovering the roots which are common to the peoples and cultures of the Mediterranean. The historical background of the civilization and peoples of the Mediterranean as presented by Fernand Braudel encouraged this hope. The 'cultural pollen' which had circulated through the centuries in the Mediterranean area, carried by sailors, merchants, pilgrims, pirates, and warriors, and which has created a subtle framework of links, was thereby to result in unified activity among the universities and scholars in our particular region.

The response from the participants of the Conference was very encouraging; the interesting subjects dealt with by the six working groups resulted in the final motion which was unanimously approved. However, three central and closely-connected problems emerged, for which the Universities of the Mediterranean would have to develop common programmes of research. They are: (1) the exploitation of natural and environmental resources, (2) the exploitation of scientific potential to overcome technological imbalance, and (3) the exploitation of cultural and artistic values.

Permanent Commission Established

In order to achieve these programmes, the Conference decided to set up a Permanent Commission, delegating the University of Bari to promote the necessary contacts with the other universities for a future meeting. This meeting was held in Bari in September 1983, during which the Community of Mediterranean Universities was constituted and its statute approved. This statute is composed of 13 articles and a number of temporary rules, the first of which states the objectives of the Community of Mediterranean Universities as:

- 1) to reaffirm and develop the role and function of culture and technological and scientific research for the resolution of the difficult and complex problems created by the development of the countries of the Mediterranean sea;

- 2) to promote scientific cooperation among the Mediterranean universities, using the experience and resources of each university while respecting the differences and the specificity of the different nationalities; and
- 3) to set up permanent links among the abovementioned universities through the reciprocal exchange of scientific and cultural experience and information of teaching staff and students.

In the other articles, the duties and functions of the various sections of the Community are specified: they are the President, the General Assembly of the Member Universities, the Council of the Community, the Head Office, and the permanent Work Commissions.

In Art. 8, four commissions were designated first in order to carry out the activities of the community:

- 1) Commission for Educational and General Affairs.
- 2) Commission for Cultural Affairs.
- 3) Commission for Scientific Affairs.
- 4) Commission for Communication Affairs.

The statute, in its essential form, has three key ideas: a) to involve the representatives of the different national groups as much as possible; b) to stimulate genuine cooperation whose ultimate point of reference—besides, naturally, the progress of science—should be the improvement of relations among the peoples of the Mediterranean; c) furthermore to cover all fields of scientific research and to compare the different experiences and methodologies which have developed in the Mediterranean Universities.

Assemblies of the Community

In the first assembly of the Community of Mediterranean Universities, held in Bari in May 1984, the regulations establishing the functioning of the various sections of the Community were approved—in particular a secretarial staff was set up for the Head Office, the structure of the Work Commissions was defined, the procedures for the presentation and the evaluation and financing of the research projects were specified, and the publication of a *Community Bulletin* was decided upon. With regard to the regulations, I should stress the meaning of the rule requesting that projects be presented by at least three different countries of the Mediterranean; this expresses the spirit of cooperation required by the Community and points out the ways in which cooperation must develop. After the approval of the regulations, the Council of the Community was established and the Presidents of the Work Commissions were appointed.

In November 1987, the General Assembly of the Member Universities approved the various proposals for research programmes and full activities which are due to start shortly. Particular attention to the programmes should be paid by naturalists and ecologists of all the member countries and especially by those who live in industrialized countries. Quite often supra-national organizations are oriented towards exporting the technical capacities of the 'developing' countries in order to increase their own production while improving the developing nations' economy. By doing so, the developed countries really help the economies of developing countries, but at the same time benefit themselves from such improvements.

The programmes of the new Community here described, in the section related to natural resources, should be oriented towards producing without destroying—producing within a framework of environmental protection and conservation. Growth there should be for the developing countries and by consequence for the developed; but it must be a growth without ecodisaster.

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The International Environmental Bureau

The International Environmental Bureau (IEB) is a specialized division of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), financed independently by industrial concerns from around the world. IEB's fundamental *objective* is to promote efficient environmental management for sustainable economic growth, and its primary *purpose* is to make available to companies everywhere the latest industrial expertise and techniques for managing environmental issues.

IEB serves as a trans-industry reference centre for environmental information on the control and abatement of pollution from industrial and commercial activity. As a non-profit entity, IEB does not charge for these information services, and indeed strives to encourage *voluntary* action by business leaders to improve their environmental

performance. While IEB attempts to respond to requests for industrial information on pollution control technology to companies world-wide, we have tentatively identified 14 developing nations for priority attention: they are Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Greece, India, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, and Turkey. For more information please write to the undersigned.

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Genetic Diversity

There can scarcely be any expression that is better understood in the scientific community and yet not understood at all outside that group, than 'Genetic Diversity'. Many laymen believe that we should conserve Nature, but few can give a rational explanation of why they feel this way. What the scientists are saying is that the conservation of Nature is, *inter alia* and perhaps preeminently, for the purpose of maintaining into the future the choices that are now available to us for resolving the unpredictable problems which we shall have to face in a world of shrinking resources and burgeoning human population. In today's world, conservation is not just altruism, but rather a matter of future survival.

The living world can be likened to an iceberg: not only is it gradually melting away, but the greater, submerged part is quite unknown to us. The tip corresponds to the fraction of living species that science has recorded: some 1.5 million. Estimates of the entire bulk vary from three to ten millions, and of this some 500,000 are 'melting away' and may be lost by the year AD 2000—just 12 years from now. All possible conservation efforts should serve to keep the rate of 'melting' to a minimum. For who knows what species are faced with extinction? Could one of them, for instance, be the only bee that can pollinate the Brazil-nut tree (*Bertholletia excelsa*) or another be a grassy weed that might have helped us to breed a disease- or drought-resistant cereal?

We can neither predict what natural products we will require in the future, nor what plants, animals, or microorganisms, can provide us with new drugs, raw materials, or foodstuffs. Conservation allows us to have still a wide

range of resources to call upon to face the changing world. For example, the qualities attributed to crop plants and livestock, such as yield and nutritional values, are rarely if ever permanent. As any farmer knows, they either 'grow out' with succeeding generations, or pests evolve new strains and so overcome resistance. Continual breeding programmes, commonly using wild plants and animals, are thus essential to maintain yields. Nature mercifully offers surprises as to how some organism can become useful to Mankind (many Algae, for instance, may become valuable sources of protein). Who knows what other raw materials or services may thus be provided from the still-vast store of Nature.

Our perceptions of Nature vary from individual to individual. A tropical forest may offer quick profit and a cheap source of wood to some, a home for beautiful butterflies for others, or a watershed complete with Nature's own pumping-station (gravity)—a natural reservoir that will ensure fresh water for all time. Should short-term gains be allowed to breed long-term problems? Increasingly, decision-makers are wrestling with these questions. Even industrialists have come to recognize that if they harvest natural resources it must be done 'sustainably', or they will in time risk putting themselves out of business.

The world has become too crowded a place, and our demands are now too heavy, to expect Mother Nature to repair all the damages done by Man. But a *World Conservation Strategy* augmented by *National Conservation Strategies* such as already exist in over 30 nations world-wide, may finally provide the balance that has been missing between what we desire and what we can take safely (sus-