

Notes and News

The first Conference of the Inter-African Committee for Social Sciences, Bukavu

THE Inter-African Committee for Social Sciences, established by CCTA (see *Africa*, xxv. 4, October 1955, p. 435), held its first conference at Bukavu (Belgian Congo) from 23 August to 3 September 1955. The members of the Committee, consisting of representatives of the six member governments, were as follows: Professor Olbrechts (Belgium), M. Deschamps (France), Dr. Audrey Richards (United Kingdom), Professor Mendes Corrêa (Portugal), Professor Pauw (Union of South Africa), Mr. Irvine (Central African Federation). About 100 representatives of research organizations and other bodies, official and unofficial, were present as delegates or observers.

M. Brasseur, Governor of the Province of Kivu, in opening the Conference, outlined the main themes which were to be the subject of the discussions and emphasized the importance of considering the 'human personality' in all schemes of study and research in Africa. He referred to the disconcerting rapidity of development in Africa at the present time and mentioned some of the specific problems—housing, nutrition, questions of movable and real property, choice of languages for education and communication—now demanding attention.

On the proposal of M. Deschamps, Professor Olbrechts was unanimously elected Chairman of the Conference, which then divided into six sections, based on disciplines, as follows: I. Demography, human geography, and economics; II. Social anthropology, sociology, ethno-history; III. Physical anthropology, psychology, nutrition; IV. Linguistics; V. Public administration; VI. Art and technology.

A specialist had been appointed for each section to introduce the topics which were to be considered, and reports by experts, which had been prepared before the conference, were presented and discussed. These included general reports on researches and publications completed or in progress in different areas of Africa, furnished by the governments concerned and by universities and research institutes in Africa and in metropolitan countries, as well as papers on specific topics falling within the six main subjects, contributed by experts in particular fields of study. In addition to meetings of the various sections some general, interdisciplinary meetings were held.

The generous hospitality of the Government of the Belgian Congo, which acted as host to the Conference, included excursions to the centres of IRSAC at Lwiro and Astrida and a two-days' tour through Kivu, visiting the INEAC station at Mulungu, the medical centre, school and mission at Kalana, the country of the Havu people, the mountains of Katali and Nyalufaranga inhabited by the Hunde, and the district of Walikale, peopled by Nyanga and Kumu. The party stayed overnight at the mission station at Mutongo, where a programme of Nyanga songs and dances was presented, accompanied by traditional musical instruments. Ritual dances, chants and elegies (dance of the warriors, initiation dances, hunting dances, recitations of tribal traditions) were included. In addition, the party had an opportunity of inspecting Mutongo village and observing some of the traditional activities of village life.

The Conference made a great number of recommendations, which will be referred to the governments of the member states. These concerned, *inter alia*, the need for demographic surveys and censuses of urban and rural areas and the preparation of maps showing population distribution and density; the collection of statistical data; the collection and

preservation of oral traditions, local archives, and other historical material, and the exchange of information concerning such collections; the preparation and publication of monographs and surveys, on the lines of the Ethnographic Survey produced by the International African Institute. A number of recommendations emphasized the need for physical and biological studies of African populations, including studies of physical, psychological, and mental development, and the influence of heredity, cultural environment, diet, and health. Others were concerned with the study of African languages, and proposals were made for the setting up of an Inter-African Committee for Language Problems and of a committee for organizing the recording and translation of traditional literature; the need for closer co-operation between linguists and other workers in the social sciences in Africa was stressed, and a proposal was made for the compilation of a list showing the state of linguistic documentation (i.e. descriptions, lexicons, texts) for each African language. Recommendations were also made for the systematic investigation, by linguists and anthropologists, of certain specific groups (Pygmies, Bushmen, Hottentots, Teke) as well as of the Creole languages in West Africa, and of various vehicular languages such as Pidgin. A number of recommendations dealt with the desirability of establishing close and permanent relations between workers in the social sciences and the Administrations of African territories, and securing, through CCTA, co-operation between member governments in this connexion. Recommendations were made as to studies which could usefully be undertaken on such topics as the evolution of traditional social systems, the role of educated Africans in the community, the evolution of systems of land tenure, the development of rural communities, economic development and the productivity of African labour, African law and custom and its development and application. In the fields of archaeology and pre-history, recommendations were made regarding the preservation of sites, the investigation and recording of material by qualified persons, and the publishing of catalogues of archaeological material. A number of recommendations concerned measures to be taken to foster the study of African art in all its forms and to encourage African artists.

Particular stress was laid in many of the recommendations on the need for the exchange of information and the co-ordination of studies and researches being carried out by the various disciplines in all areas of Africa. This work of co-ordination and information is the primary purpose for which CCTA/CSA, with its numerous dependent committees, was constituted.

World Health Organization

THE fifth WHO Regional Committee for Africa was held from 19 to 24 September 1955 in Tananarive, Madagascar. The participants included delegates from member states and Associate Members of the African Region south of the Sahara; the Chairman was Médecin Colonel Pierre Bernard of the Direction du Service de Santé de la France d'Outre-Mer. Dr. M. J. Candau, Director-General of WHO, spoke on the current aspects of malaria control. The Regional Director for Africa (Dr. F. J. C. Cambournac) presented his annual report, which was discussed by the Committee and approved. The Committee also discussed the health problems of the pre-school-age child in Africa and the role of the nurse in the solution of these problems. Owing to the fact that African mothers are much occupied with the care of infants, and that, moreover, they very often rely on children of 2-6 years to look after the infants while the mothers are working, it may happen that the health of these children is neglected. The Committee agreed on the need for training African public health visitors, and on the need for public health centres to organize 'schools for mothers'.

The next meeting of the Regional Committee for Africa will be held from 24 to 29 September 1956 at Luanda, Angola, when the subject of discussion will be 'Practical Public Health as a means of tuberculosis control in the African region'.