Certainly be beyond the level at which the proposed trainee could profit by it.

Furthermore, no course in health education lasting only two months could be a completely adequate training. This is, in fact, a course with a limited objective, but the result should meet the designs, and that is within their departments, and as an extension of their normal work, the trainees should be able to pass on in an effective way, not only health education itself, but, to their colleagues, some indication of the methods of teaching. How this is to be done in the various territories depends on local circumstances, but one visualises it operating something like this.

Let us take the case of a teacher. He might be employed for a period in giving demonstration health education lessons to village schools. His colleagues in watching him should learn something of the methods employed, and thus could be supplemented by later discussion. It might be later that in a larger school, he could be charged with the giving of lessons in hygiene for several classes. The possibilities are many.

Or take the assistant medical practitioner or medical assistant who has attended such a course. He could be employed on a visiting mission, as it were, to stimulate this work among his colleagues, previous planning allowing him to give, in villages or centres, health education talks and demonstrations. This would stimulate attention to the subject in the district medical staff and in the minds and thoughts of the people. Similarly, the nurse could visit other district nurses.

It is the same technique as that of the visiting evangelist. It focuses attention on and stimulates enthusiasm for whatever ‘good news’ is to be spread. The method dates back at least to St. Paul’s day. Of course the stimulus has to be repeated from time to time; that is normal. But the impetus given and the momentum gained is never wholly lost. Always some advance has been made, and from the new ‘jumping-off place’ we may advance further next time.

More Help For The Future

Even now, we have a means to prolong and consolidate the work of the Course. It is proposed to appoint a fully-trained health educator who will not only assist with the Course, but will, for a two-year period, be available to visit, advise, and assist Course trainees when they return to their territories.

Naturally the need for his services will vary from area to area. Where the administration already employs a senior health educator there may be no need at all for further follow-up work so far as the South Pacific Commission is concerned. Many territories, however, have no such specialist officer, and will desire visits and advice from the health educator, both as to the best employment of Course trainees, and also probably to advise on the general organization and planning of health education in the area. That advisory service of course will be at no cost to the territory, the cost falling on international funds.

Sponges In Rakahanga Lagoon

Contributed by Ronald Powell, Cook Islands

During a recent visit to Rakahanga Islands we explored the area in which sponges seem to grow very well, and in a few minutes collected about twenty from 9” to 20” across.

We left these sponges, which when gathered are a black jelly-like mass, to be processed by the Rakahanga people, who clean them by first burying them just above high tide level for a few days, when the jelly-like mass rots off. The skeleton is then washed out and sun-dried.

At time of writing it is not known what variety of sponge these are, or whether this variety has any commercial value. It is superficially similar to the sponges used in industry, which command quite a high price, and for which has always existed a demand greater than the supply. Like trochus and pearl shell, sponges seemed to have been over-fished in most parts of the world where they grow naturally.

No one in the atolls seemed able to recognize any different varieties, and as I made enquiries people came up with the most conflicting statements. I found natives who had grown up on Manihiki who did not know the native name for a sponge, while others had never even noticed them growing. I came away feeling that if these lagoons were searched carefully, other varieties might well be found. Unfortunately there is such a limited time during the loading of local shipping that little can be done ashore. Almost everyone has business to transact and letters to write. There is never much labour offering nor is there time available for men whose opinion would be worth considering to carry out a search while the ship is lying outside the reef.

It is, however, hoped that more information will be available soon on the commercial possibilities of planting sponges in the region. It is well known that the Japanese were successful in planting and growing sponges in the Caroline Islands before World War II stopped this work. Sponges have also been grown successfully in the Gulf of Mexico, although repeated hurricanes have often destroyed these otherwise successful plantings.

Rakahanga Lagoon seems to be the most likely at present in this Group for such a project.