Fisheries Training Course
Mid-Term Report

January 4 marked the close of the seventh week of the thirteen-week Fisheries Training Course now being held at South Pacific Commission headquarters. Progress made in the first half of the Course is reviewed below by the Commission's fisheries officer

H. VAN PEL

We are now in the middle of the Course, and progress so far has been very satisfactory. It is remarkable how the students, some of whom have never before been away from their islands, have adapted themselves to their new surroundings. Among the 25 trainees several languages and many nationalities are represented. However, they all share a common love for the sea and a keen interest in fishing, and all have settled down happily.

The Course is being held in a detached wing of the Commission headquarters building which has been specially converted for the purpose into lecture hall, lounge and dining room, and bedrooms. Here the trainees attend lectures, take their meals and sleep, all under the one roof.

For recreation there is ping pong, billiards and swimming, while in the evenings there is usually a group of trainees harmonizing island songs to the strains of a guitar, mouth organ and ukulele.

Most of the students are excellent at writing and sketching. (In passing, it is remarkable that several of the best at drawing were self-taught.)

Their Fisheries Course training has been strongly practical. At the beginning many were unable to make a simple net. To-day all can knit not only rectangular nets, but other more complicated shapes as well. Recently, they started on the mounting of nets on cork and lead ropes, and have shown good progress.

When the Course opened most of the students were not experienced in boat (Continued on page 49)
Top left: Mr. P. Lusyne, FAO fisheries training specialist, demonstrates a point in net making.

Centre: Mr. van Pel explains to trainees how fish in slatted crates submerged in the harbour are transferred by scoop net to wheeled seawater tanks for delivery to the nearby fish market.

Bottom left: At the Noumea fish market a student displays a live Bec de cane, a popular eating fish.

Mr. Arthur Swinfield gives students a practical lesson in boat repairing.

For the later benefit of Radio Australia listeners, Mr. Reginald Drake of the Australian Broadcasting Commission interviews Mr. van Pel on the main points of fish farming.
First Results Obtained

Research carried out at the lower level of the vertical distribution of this pearl shell molluse, on its growth and reproduction has shown that: (1) contrary to popular belief, no trochus is to be found at a great depth; (2) the recent evolution of fishing, showing a tendency to intensify exploitation of the bottom of the outer fringe of the reef, means indeed plundering the last natural reserve of the reproductive individuals of the species; this reserve lies within reach of the skin divers; (3) it is both urgent and necessary to substitute for this last natural reserve, which is rapidly dwindling away, another source of reproductive individuals whose perennity will be guaranteed by raising the minimum size under which trochus fishing becomes illegal; (4) should these steps not be taken without further delay in view of the protection of the species, there might be a risk of our having to cross the industry of trochus fishing off the list of territorial resources.

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building and repairing, and installing marine engines. Now all have at least an elementary knowledge of both subjects.

The students have shown a keen interest in fish cultivation. Last year the Commission established two experimental fish ponds at the Port Laguerre Farm School, near Nouméa. They were stocked with fingerlings flown from Manila of three species of edible fish, *Tilapia mossambica*, *Osphronemus goramy*, and *Trichogaster pectoralis*.

So far the trainees have paid several visits to the ponds. Under supervision they have drained one pond by removing the sluice, netting the fish in the outflow and holding them in containers of fresh water for transplanting later to natural ponds on nearby farms.

Practical demonstrations have been given in fish preservation. The students now know how to salt and dry fish. Shortly they will also be shown how to smoke them. After several more practical lessons they will be able to preserve fish themselves, and to instruct their own people in the best ways of doing so.

Lectures have already been given on the biology and conservation of pearl shell and trochus. There will be others, mainly on ways of transplanting both.

Students have been given a simple grounding in oceanography and the theory of navigation. Practical navigation lessons will follow during short cruises on *Orsom III*, the research vessel that the French Institute of Oceania is generously making available for training purposes.

Under problems of management, trainees have been given a general introduction to co-operation, and to ways of organizing and managing a fishermen's co-operative society. Aspects treated so far are trust and credit, as well as the elements of marketing, including the purchase of co-operatively-owned boats and the associated financial problems. Simple lessons in bookkeeping have also been given, so far up to but excluding the closing of accounts.

As a practical demonstration of co-operation a thrift society has been started by the trainees. To date their savings total 17,280 Pacific francs (£A.121 approximately). The lecturer plans that when the Course finishes each trainee will be sufficiently trained to act as secretary of a simple co-operative society.

In the six weeks left of the Course students will have, in addition to regular lectures, practical instruction at sea in handling, seining, trolling, and setting of gill nets, as well as in navigation.

The Course will close on February 22nd. When it was first proposed there were some who thought that language problems and widely varying standards of education among the trainees would prove obstacles too difficult to overcome. Happily this has certainly not been so, and we expect that when the Course is over the students will take home, to pass on to their own people, a most valuable knowledge of modern ways of catching, keeping and marketing fish.

Plywood Industry In Papua And New Guinea

The Australian Minister for Territories, Mr. Paul Hasluck, referred recently to the development of the plywood industry at Bulolo, New Guinea.

He recalled that following investigations by experts, a joint enterprise by the Commonwealth Government and Bulolo Gold Dredging Limited, known as Commonwealth-New Guinea Timbers Limited, was set up in 1953 to carry out the harvesting of the Bulolo Valley pine stand. The joint company, in which the Commonwealth holds a controlling interest, built a £1,300,000 plywood mill at Bulolo, which commenced operations in January 1954.

Production has averaged nearly 30,000,000 square feet of plywood on a 3/16" base per year. Approximately 200 Europeans and 400 indigenous people are employed in the enterprise.

The company was operating profitably soon after commencing production, and has continued to do so. Its initial products were highly moisture-resistant plywood and some veneers, to which was added later, waterproof plywood. Both these types of plywood are different from the bulk of Australian production and have opened up new uses for plywood.

U.S.A., Australia, the Pacific Islands and the Territory of Papua and New Guinea are the principal markets for the plywood. The export value of this product in 1955/56 was £749,179. Exports of veneers were valued at £9,440.

Mr. Hasluck concluded by saying that this enterprise was contributing materially to the advancement of the indigenous people and the general development of the Territory.

Santa Gertrudis Crossbreds

Doing Well In Fiji

TWELVE calves sired by the four Santa Gertrudis bulls imported from Australia by the Fiji Department of Agriculture in 1955 have been born so far. Six of the calves are at the Sigatoka Agricultural Station and the other six at the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's Yaqara estate.

At Sigatoka, one Santa Gertrudis bull was mated with 27 Red Poll heifers and another with a number of Zebu cross-females. The two bulls at Yaqara were mated with 25 Herefords. Observations on the different cross-breeds have begun. So far the cross-bred calves are showing up well, and compare more than favourably with pure-bred calves of the respective breeds.