South Pacific Fisheries Training

Course

Twenty-five trainees from fourteen Pacific territories will attend the Fisheries Training Course scheduled to open at Commission headquarters on November 19. The Course, which will last about ten weeks, will be under the direction of the Commission's Fisheries Officer, Mr. H. van Pel, with a fisheries technologist from the Food and Agriculture Organization as co-director. This article briefly explains the reasons for holding the Course, and gives details of the curriculum.

By H. VAN PEL

Possibilities Of Fisheries Development

Among the many possibilities of fisheries development can be mentioned the improvement of fishing gear, and in a few cases, the mechanization of small fishing craft.

Again, in some areas gluts of fish occur occasionally, and there is considerable wastage as preservation of surpluses is not practised. Some solution for avoiding such losses must be found, even if no salt is available or weather conditions are unfavourable.

There are also large surfaces of inland waters in the Pacific region which could, if developed, produce considerable supplies of fish.

Obviously, solutions do not present themselves ready-made, nor can the present status of fisheries in the region be changed overnight. It is necessary, however, to make a start somewhere.

Fisheries Conference To Study Problems

Many administrations in the South Pacific are anxious to develop their fisheries. While some already have qualified fisheries officers in their employ, most have neither fisheries departments nor expert personnel to take care of their marine resources.

It was with the purpose of examining and defining fisheries problems of the region that, in October 1952 the South Pacific Commission convened a fisheries conference at Nouméa.

One recommendation of the conference urged the appointment of a fisheries officer to the Commission. Another drew the Commission's attention to the usefulness of the courses in technical fisheries instruction held in the Indo-Pacific region with the assistance of the Food and Agricultural Organization.

In June 1955 the Commission approached the FAO for help in organizing a similar course of instruction for the Pacific. The assistance sought was promptly forthcoming, and in October 1955 the Commission gave final approval for the holding of a Pacific fisheries course at its headquarters.

Course To Open In November

The South Pacific Fisheries Training Course is scheduled to open on 19th November next, and will close on or about 24th February 1957.

The Food and Agriculture Organization is assigning a fisheries technologist as co-director of the Course. As well, FAO is providing substantial financial aid, part of the necessary equipment, and will send lecturers.

Assistance has also been promised by the French Administration of New Caledonia, and by the oceanographic staff of the French Institute of Oceania (IFO), Nouméa, Orsom III, the oceanographic research vessel of IFO, will, as far as is possible, be made available for field trips.

The Course will be attended by twenty-five trainees from fourteen Pacific territories. Nine lecturers will cover the

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* Mr. H. van Pel was appointed Fisheries Officer to the Commission in July, 1954.
wide range of subjects comprising the curriculum. Accommodation and classrooms are being provided at Commission headquarters.

This will be the first fisheries training course held in the region within the scope of the Commission. Training centres and seminars have been held under FAO auspices in many countries, but were rather more specialized undertakings designed for trainees already having considerable experience in fisheries matters.

In contrast, this Course is designed to give trainees basic knowledge in fisheries, to pave the way for primary development in the area. Both in content and treatment it relates to conditions prevailing in the South Pacific.

Interpreters equipped for simultaneous interpretation will enable instruction to be given both in English and French. The Course will include theoretical and practical instruction, including field trips.

Wide Variety Of Subjects

Trainees will be told about the behaviour, habits and habitat of fish; movements of the sea, and influence of wind, currents and sunlight on its living creatures; various items of commercial fishing gear and their operation; elementary navigation; the handling, transport and marketing of fish, and its processing and preservation; the culture of various species of fish and shell-fish; the conservation of marine resources; principles of boat building; maintenance of engines and fishing craft; and, finally, the problems of management in fisheries.

More details will be given in a later issue of the Bulletin regarding this new development in the field of fisheries in the South Pacific.

Fisheries Conference Recommendations

At the Fisheries Conference held in Noumea under Commission auspices in October 1952 the following views and recommendations were recorded. The Conference:

—stressed that in some territories populations were growing so rapidly that to increase fish production was the only way to maintain even existing levels of fish consumption;
—considered that coral reef and atoll areas, the main source of fish supply in the region, had a definite limit of yield; that mangrove and estuarine areas were abundant and relatively unexplored areas of fish; and that oceanic sources were more extensive, commercially-valuable species such as tuna and mackerel being found in abundance in some areas;
—considered that methods used in the processing, marketing, and distribution of fish in the South Pacific were generally inadequate, even at the existing relatively low levels of consumption;
—recommended the establishment where necessary of territorial fishing services to encourage development of the industry, and requested the Commission to explore the possibility of providing a special course of lectures on fisheries administration for officers recruited within the region;
—recommended that Governments should promote the development of community fishing enterprises, should encourage the use of modern fishing techniques; and should aid fishermen to acquire the necessary powered craft and modern equipment;
—considered that if the appointment by the Commission of a Fisheries Officer to implement its recommendations were approved, his main tasks should be: (i) to co-ordinate fisheries development projects in the various territories, (ii) to study new fishing techniques tested in the region, (iii) to advise member Governments of the Commission regarding their fisheries programmes, and, (iv) to gather and disseminate information currently lacking on the fisheries of the South Pacific.

A cruiser carrying delegates to the Fisheries Conference, towing pirogues to fishing grounds off New Caledonia for a demonstration of native reef fishing methods.