

## Notes and News

### *Grant by the British Government for Colonial Research.*

All students of African problems will welcome the announcement made by Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, the British Colonial Secretary, on February 20th last, that the British Government, as a complement to a grant not exceeding £5,000,000 a year for 10 years to assist the development of the British colonial and mandated territories, will provide a maximum of £500,000 a year for the same period for Colonial research. 'The Government', says the Official White Paper [Cmd. 6175]:

'have had access in the past, in dealing with questions of Colonial research, to the advice of scientific and technical experts in this country; but they are anxious to place the system on a wider and more regular basis, and they consider that this object can best be achieved by the establishment of a Colonial Research Advisory Committee and by the allocation of a separate sum for Colonial research up to a maximum of £500,000 a year. In reaching this decision they had in mind the proposal for special provision for research made by Lord Hailey in his "African Survey", and they take this opportunity of acknowledging this debt to him for the suggestion.

With the major grant—which is to be spent on 'development in the widest sense, but also for helping to meet recurrent expenditure in the Colonies on certain services such as agriculture, education, health and housing'—the Institute is not directly concerned, except in so far as linguistic problems arise in connection with education; but it is deeply interested in the question of research in a field which covers, together with other British colonial territories, all that part of Tropical Africa which is under British administration as well as Swaziland, Bechuanaland, and Basutoland. Besides expressing the satisfaction which all members of the Institute must feel at the decision of the British Government to provide so large a sum for research in backward parts of the world, two comments may perhaps be made. In the first place, the scientific study of African problems transcends political frontiers and cannot be confined to any particular group of territories. It is to be hoped, therefore, that similar advances in research may be made possible in African countries for which the British Government is not responsible, and that, in that event, means may be found for international co-operation and for co-ordinating the programmes and results of national research. In the second place, while a great part of the British grant will doubtless be expended on parallel lines with those of the grant for

development—on research, for instance, in agriculture, education, and health—the maximum results will only be achieved if sociological and linguistic research is carried out at the same time and, as far as possible, especially where ‘field-work’ is required, in personal co-operation with the representatives of the other sciences. It may, indeed, be taken for granted that the new Advisory Committee will allocate an adequate amount to sociological and linguistic research. For the scientific study of vernacular languages is now fully recognised as essential for the proper development of education in Tropical Africa, and it is notorious that the results of research in other sciences may often be misapplied and the theoretical work prove ineffective in practice unless the sociological factors in the case have also been studied and understood.

*Notes on the Study of African Society.*

*The Study of African Society* by Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey Wilson (pp. 20. 6d. 1939) is a valuable addition to the series of Papers published by the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. It is designed primarily for the untrained observer. And in the twenty pages of a pamphlet that can be slipped into a pocket it provides him with the essentials of a method of study.

A description of the main types of social grouping is followed by an account of the many-sided nature of social activities and of the need for keeping in view all of these various aspects if the bias of personal interest is to be counteracted and some measure of objectivity achieved. The enumeration of the varieties of grouping that must be investigated might perhaps have closed with a reminder that the character of the social whole will largely depend on the balance between its various component groups. The distribution of authority for instance may tend towards a unitary or towards a pluralistic type of organization and it is perhaps worth pointing out that such tendencies should be summed up in the final picture.

Since stress is laid on the fact that ‘the student should have a thorough knowledge of the local vernacular’ the Bibliography might have included the Memorandum published by this Institute entitled *Practical Suggestions for Learning an African Language in the Field* by Dr. I. C. Ward.

But so many things have been packed into such a small compass in this admirable survey that it is churlish to ask for more. An astonishing number of particular examples are included and make a live thing of what, being so compressed, might have been an arid list of general principles. Trained as well as untrained investigators will find this pamphlet a most helpful summary.

Specially welcome is this attempt to cater for the need of European residents in Africa who would willingly observe something of the people among whom they live. Many of them have both time and opportunity. And as