

qu'il faut les rapprocher de façon à faciliter le mélange des différents groupes. Pour commencer, il propose de favoriser autant que possible, les mariages entre les populations voisines. C'est là, à son avis, le seul moyen pour briser l'homozygote des caractères héréditaires et arriver par leur dissociation et la recombinaison des composants, à la multiplicité de caractères indispensable au progrès de la race noire.

À cet égard, il peut être intéressant de remarquer que les centres extra-coutumiers, qui à la suite de la mise en valeur du pays sont nés à proximité des villes européennes, présentent de grandes possibilités. La diversité ethnique des individus qui les composent y favorise singulièrement le mélange souhaité. (*Communication du PROFESSEUR N. DE CLEENE.*)

Soil Erosion in Africa.

A REPORT¹ by Sir Frank Stockdale, Agricultural Adviser to the Colonial Office, on a tour of East Africa made early in 1937, has drawn public attention to the gravity of the damage which is being done by soil erosion in many East African territories. The Council of the Royal African Society at its meeting of October 20th, 1937, passed a resolution

'That this Council views with the gravest concern the widespread destruction of the African soil by erosion consequent on wasteful methods of husbandry which strike at the basis of rural economy and Native welfare, and is of opinion that immediate steps should be taken for the adoption of a common policy and energetic measures throughout British Africa in order to put an effective check upon this growing menace to the fertility of the land and to the health of its inhabitants.'

Copies of this resolution were forwarded to the Secretaries of State for the Dominions and the Colonies, and it has been communicated by the Colonial Office to the Governments of the East and West African territories.

In order to draw further attention to the problem the Royal African Society devoted a recent monthly dinner to a discussion of the subject by a number of experts, under the presidency of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. The text of the speeches delivered is reproduced as a supplement to the January number of the Society's Journal, and the analysis of the different processes leading to erosion, and the steps necessary to combat them, which was the subject of the speech of Professor E. S. Stebbing, late of the Indian Forest Service, is developed at length by him in another supplement.²

Erosion may be produced by excessive cultivation, by excessive grazing and trampling by stock, by the burning of the bush, by cultivation on slopes without protection such as terracing, or by the felling of trees in hilly or mountainous areas. The effects of all these processes are cumulative and

¹ C.A.C. 34, Colonial Office, July 1937.

² 'Land Usage and Soil Erosion in Africa', 'The Man-made Desert in Africa'.

lead to the destruction of the fertile top soil and the reduction of large areas to sand or even bare rock, while the decrease in water-supplies and lowering of the water-table leads to a decrease and eventual cessation of rainfall which was formerly regular.

The process can be checked by re-forestation and by the introduction of measures for the conservation of water-supplies, but at the point which it has reached in many parts of Africa it seems impossible to save large areas of soil from destruction without radical modifications in traditional native methods of agriculture and pasturing. Changes which are regarded as urgent by experts are the abandonment of the practice of firing the bush, the introduction of a regular crop rotation, the use of manure, a drastic reduction in the numbers of native stock and the paddocking of those that remain. Two attitudes towards the changes desired can be observed in the remarks of the different speakers. One simply demands stern measures to 'combat the wasteful and improvident habits of the people'. The other, exemplified in the Report of the Ecological Survey of Northern Rhodesia and in Sir Frank Stockdale's speech, recognizes that the habits in question have their roots deep in the institutions of the peoples concerned, and were not only harmless but in many cases well adapted to local circumstances before those circumstances were changed by European agencies. It is hardly a fair ground of reproach against the African that he has not instinctively adapted to the new conditions methods which must have been evolved at the cost of hard experience over many generations. Matters now have reached a point where some tribes are threatened with actual starvation if they do not give up their cherished cattle. The dilemma is serious, and it is clear that here it is too late to counsel respect for African values, and vain merely to draw the moral from the indifference to the facts of native society that could light-heartedly attempt to teach the African to utilize land in an economic manner simply by allowing him less land to use. Yet the need remains to proceed with an understanding of what the changes which may have to be forced upon them will mean to the tribes concerned, and as far as possible to direct those changes along the lines which native society can follow with least strain, and native opinion accept with least resentment. No anthropologist, however great his sympathy for the African's attachment to his own customs, would maintain that in a case like this they must be left undisturbed; but anthropologists can with justice claim that the social implications of measures of such moment to African life should be taken into account in addition to purely technical considerations. (*Communicated by* DR. L. P. MAIR.)

L'Avenir de l'agriculture congolaise.

LA reprise économique de la colonie, rendant au célèbre discours que le Prince Royal de Belgique prononça au sénat le 25 juillet 1933 toute son