

Enclosure.

CIRCULAR.

SIR,—

Downing Street, 11th August, 1927.

I have the honour to invite your attention to the Report of the Committee of the Colonial Office Conference on Colonial Scientific and Research Services, which is printed in full in Section VIII of the Summary of Proceedings of the Conference (Cmd. 2883), copies of which were enclosed in Mr. Amery's circular despatch of the 15th June. As stated in that section, the report of this committee was considered by the Conference on the 27th May, when the following resolutions were adopted :—

“ The Conference approve of the general principles and objects of the scheme of agricultural research organization set out in the Report of the Committee of the Conference on Colonial Scientific and Research Services, and request the Colonial Office to set up a committee to work out a detailed scheme for submission to all the Governments concerned.

“ The Conference are of the opinion, on the figures before them, that the scheme could be adequately initiated on an income of about £175,000, of which a considerable portion, however, would be in replacement of existing expenditure on the salaries of agricultural research officers.”

2. As will be seen from their terms of reference, the committee were appointed to frame and submit a scheme for the creation of a Colonial Scientific and Research Service, but in view of the short time at their disposal their recommendations were confined to agriculture. In any event, however, as they point out in paragraph 56 of their report, the natural method of growth of a colonial research service is the organization, in the first instance, of workers in the various fields of science into separate services, and the principles of the scheme of agricultural research organization which were set out in their report and approved by the Conference will be of the greatest value in considering the creation of separate research services in medical, veterinary, forestry, and other spheres.

3. It may be convenient to refer briefly to the recommendations of the committee. In the first instance they recommended the constitution of a Colonial Agricultural Research Council, whose membership should be partly lay and partly scientific. The functions of this Council should include the general guidance of all research work in the Colonial Empire; the collection and publication of information where this is not already done by existing agencies; and the organization and general principles of administration of a Colonial Agricultural Research Service.

The committee recommended that a Colonial Agricultural Research Service should be formed by the admission to it of all specialist and research officers now in the colonial agricultural services, subject to certain conditions, and provided they so desired, and that all new recruits for such posts should enter the new service. Certain conditions were suggested to ensure that the proposed unified service should carry a high prestige and offer an attractive career for the best talent which could be obtained, but in the short time available it was not, of course, possible for the committee to make full recommendations on these points. I would, however, invite your attention to the proposal that a Provident Fund scheme should be instituted for the service. A Provident Fund scheme would not only avoid the complexities arising from the different pension systems of different dependencies, but would enable these scientific workers to transfer more easily not only within the colonial field but outside it. It seems clear that if we are to attract the best scientific brains from the universities of the Empire for this service the utmost freedom of movement must be assured.

The Committee also referred in paragraphs 40 and 41 of their report to the chain of group research stations. The research staff of these stations would be members of the proposed unified service, and the guidance of the research work performed by them would be part of the duties of the Headquarters Council.

The committee estimated that the cost of the proposed organization would amount to approximately £175,000, of which a considerable portion in respect of the emoluments of existing research officers is at present a charge on colonial revenues, and they suggested that that portion of the total cost which will fall upon colonial Governments should be raised by means of a percentage cess upon revenues.

Finally, the committee recommended that a further committee should be formed after the Conference to clear up details and to formulate their recommendations in a practical scheme for submission to colonial Governments.

4. It will be observed that the Conference committee made full use of the findings of the report of the committee appointed by Mr. Thomas on agricultural research and administration in the non-self-governing dependencies, and I take this opportunity to enclose copies of this report (Cmd. 2825).

Part I of this report, which relates to the recruitment and training of officers, was issued in 1925, and, as you will be aware, the scheme of colonial agricultural scholarships which resulted from the recommendations of the committee has now been in force for about two years, with encouraging results.

Parts II and III of the report were issued by the committee in October, 1926, and copies were circulated to the Research Special Sub-Committee of the Imperial Conference for information.

Part IV was issued in the early part of this year, and the complete report was thereupon printed and laid before Parliament. Copies of the report were circulated to members of the Colonial Office Conference.