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RESEARCH IN THE PACIFIC

Danish Scientists' Project

NEW ZEALAND has at present no institution dealing with oceanography, and no trained oceanographers. But among the most eager and enthusiastic of delegates who attended the Seventh Pacific Science Congress were some of the world's most distinguished oceanographers from Great Britain, Canada, Denmark and the United States

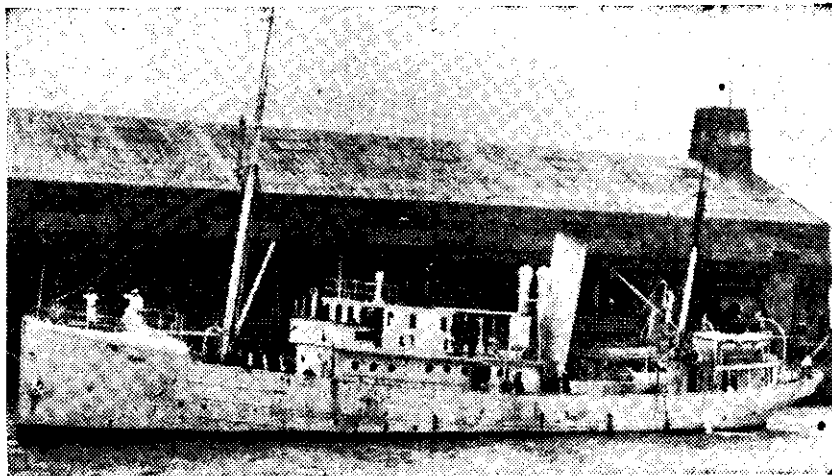
of America. One of these was Dr. Anton F. Bruun, Deputy-keeper of the Zoological Museum of Copenhagen University. Dr. Bruun has been here before. He was with the Danish Expedition of 1928-1929, in the ship Dana, which made a two years' cruise of the world under the leadership of Professor Johannes Schmidt.

While the Dana was in these waters the party made a study of the breeding

Easter Island, Tahiti, Suva, Tonga and the Kermadecs will then be trawled and the expedition will most likely spend Christmas 1950 in New Zealand waters. The party will then go to the waters south of Tasmania, the Great Australian Bight, Sydney, New Caledonia, New Guinea—where depths of up to 30,000 feet have been recorded—the Banda Sea, the Celebes and the Indian Ocean.

The Listener asked Dr. Bruun to explain the exact function of the study of oceanography, and its value to the world in general.

"That, I'm afraid, would take a long time," he said. "But briefly, it is the study of all aspects of the oceans—currents, biochemistry, fertilisers, and so on, and the plant life on which animal life is dependent. We are interested in the Pacific because the Atlantic Ocean is, in many respects, a derivative of the great Pacific whose problems are of a special kind. When we have studied the Atlantic we can appreciate the broad background of the Pacific. The Pacific has greater depths and larger areas, and so to get a general picture of the oceans we must study the Pacific.



THE DANISH vessel Dana, which visited New Zealand in 1928-29 and which was lost in 1935

Mapping the Seas

"And then there is a wide field for study on the geological side. My special field is the deep sea outside the Continental shelf, which has a limit of a hundred fathoms or more. New Zealand waters are specially interesting for they give us a shelf of perhaps 20 miles wide, and then a slope to the depths. The study of oceanography, which is not yet a century old, attracts physicists, chemists and biologists, all combined. Oceans are being mapped and described horizontally and vertically, with practical results for navigation and fisheries."

"New Zealand has been described as a large-scale laboratory. Is it ever likely to become a centre for oceanographical research?"

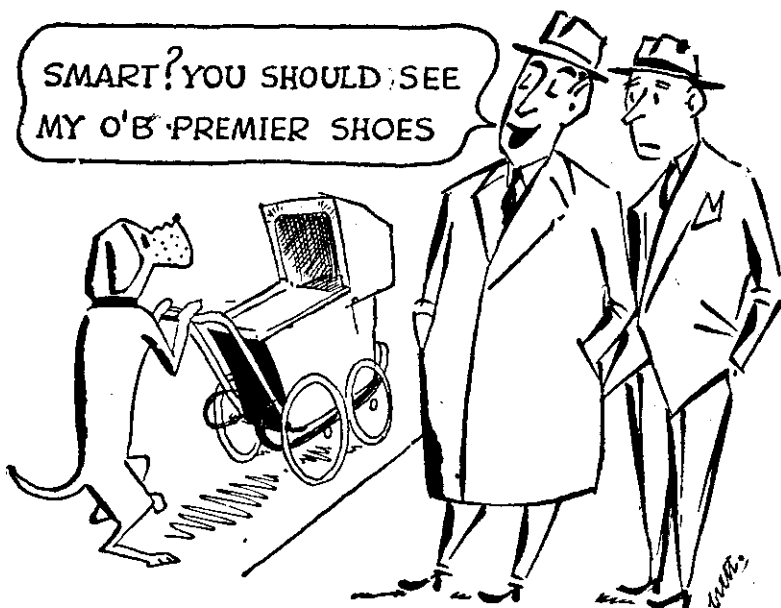
"That's hard to answer. There are so many practical aspects to be considered—the money to be invested, and so forth. From the scientific point of view New Zealand is in one of the very interesting areas of ocean, and I would be happy if Denmark were in a similar geographical position for oceanographic work. You have already started research in your coastal waters, for it is important to your fisheries that you should know their natural background. You have realised, as we did many years ago, that the harvest of the sea is limited, and that you must not kill the fish that lays the silver egg."

"Possibly New Zealand could be called a laboratory because its natural conditions are so different from those in other places. The flora and fauna are peculiar to the country. They developed for millions of years before they were interfered with by man. In fact they are quite extraordinary."

(continued on next page)

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, MARCH 4

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habits of New Zealand eels. In 1950-1952, a new Danish Expedition, under Dr. Bruun's leadership, and which New Zealand scientists will be invited to join, will visit New Zealand and Australia, among other areas, to investigate the deepest parts of coastal waters. Oceanography, according to Dr. Bruun, is, in its widest sense, an international deep-sea study and one in which Denmark has always been keenly interested. Since 1922 Denmark has been the seat of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea.

In an interview with *The Listener* Dr. Bruun said that since his last visit he had investigated the fisheries in the North Atlantic, round about Iceland, the Faroe Islands and in the North Sea. The Dana was lost in 1935, when she was run down in a fog by a German trawler. No lives were lost, but a great deal of valuable scientific material gathered from the bottom of the sea returned to the depths.

Down to the Depths

"Denmark has now given us a larger ship for research work. She is too busily engaged to be used for our forthcoming expedition, but we are to have a Danish naval vessel of 1200 tons, fitted with a heavy winch and a steel cable of 45,000 feet to lower an otter trawl," said Dr. Bruun. "This trawl will be dragged in the deepest areas to secure specimens of all kinds of life and geological material. Echo-sounding apparatus will also be used. We shall leave Copenhagen about June of next year, first to explore the depths off the west coast of South America. The waters off