

Virus bank aids research

Agriculture Canada has 45 research stations across Canada but only one, located in Vancouver, specializes in virus research.

The bank of plant viruses maintained at the station contains about 50 types of disease. Specimens are provided on request to university and government scientists.

Freeze dried

Viruses are kept in bottled solutions or as freeze-dried powders. The freeze-drying method is one of several breakthroughs made at the Vancouver station.

Other discoveries that have paralleled studies in human virus research include:

- a chemical, extracted from carnations, that has proven to be a potent anti-virus agent. It appears to be similar to interferon, a substance that is seen as a weapon against human virus infections and possibly against cancer;
- a sensitive virus-identification technique perfected at the lab and adopted by scientists around the world; and
- an apparently ordinary virus disease common to cherry trees, that has been found to be unlike any known infection of plants or people.

Station manager Marvin Weintraub considers the pure research done at the centre to be an investment.

"There is invariably a 25-year period from the first bench experiments to the final practical use," he says.

Cherry disease

A virus infection called little cherry disease wiped out the sweet cherry industry in the Kootenays, British Columbia, during the 1920s and 1930s. It now is making its way towards orchards in the Okanagan and the Lower Mainland of B.C.

The infection cannot be stopped easily because it takes hold before the symptoms — small cherries — are visible. Research is being directed towards early detection. Biologist Harry Ragetli is working to isolate microscopic rod-shaped objects that may be the actual virus.

Weintraub indicated the difficulty of the needle-in-a-haystack operation. He held up a cigarette lighter.

"If you put all the virus particles in a cell together and the cell was the size of this room, then the viruses would be about that much."

Last Mackenzie papers released

The last of former Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's papers were recently made available for research by the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa.

The documents for the year 1950 include Mackenzie King's diary, his political correspondence, the Prime Ministerial Notes and Memoranda, as well as his personal correspondence.



William Lyon Mackenzie King, Canada's Prime Minister for 21 years.

The diaries for 1950, contained in 325 pages, describe Mackenzie King's life until his death on July 22. Though King was not actively involved in politics in 1950, he did receive a number of awards for services he rendered during the Second World War. From Holland he received the Order of the Grand Cross of the Netherland's Lion (March 11), from Belgium the Order of Leopold (March 29) and from Luxembourg the Grand Cross of the Order of the Oak (May 4). Other highlights for Mackenzie King were the visits of the Duke of Windsor on April 17, 1950 and the Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Khan on June 1, 1950. King watched international events with interest throughout 1950 and was particularly worried about the outbreak of hostilities in Korea.

Declining health

Mackenzie King was primarily concerned with his declining health during the year. He never completely recovered from the heart attack he suffered at Christmas

1949 and subsequently he was under constant medical supervision.

King continued his friendship with Joan and Godfrey Patteson, spoke constantly to John D. Rockefeller Jr. on the phone, and continued his correspondence with such close friends as the Salisburys, Violet Markham and Julia Grant. His main wish throughout the winter and spring of that year was to move to Kingsmere, his estate near Ottawa, which he did on June 26, 1950.

King was also preoccupied with his will and the state of his personal papers. The fact that he was never able to begin his memoirs was a major disappointment for him.

In addition to the textual documents, photographs and sound and video recordings related to Mackenzie King's activities in 1950 were also made available by the Archives. The photographs, which were originally with the Mackenzie King Papers, are now in the custody of the National Photography Collection. In the course of their work, the National Film, Television and Sound Archives has acquired both sound and video recordings which relate to Mackenzie King and his political era.

Athletes in world rankings

Canadian athletes have made their mark recently on the world scene.

Steve Podborski of Toronto won two consecutive World Cup downhill skiing races in St. Moritz, Switzerland and Garmish-Partenkirchen, West Germany.

Podborski completed the 3,110-metre St. Moritz course in a record time of one minute 54.31 seconds. He won his second race January 10 on the 3,320-metre Kahdahar course in a record one minute 55.48 seconds. On the same course Ken Read of the Canadian team fell and suffered injuries which have put him out of World Cup competition for the rest of the season.

Also in Garmish-Partenkirchen, Horst Bulau of Ottawa won his first World Cup ski-jumping event. He collected 226.4 points with jumps of 95 and 100 metres. The victory gave Bulau 25 points for the season and fifth place in the World Cup standing after two events.

In indoor track and field competition at the Saskatoon Indoor Games, Angella Taylor of Toronto set a world indoor record of 0:36.71 in the women's 300 metres. The old mark was 0:37.13.