

### Agricultural research by Canadian chemist in Britain

The International Development Research Centre and the University of Sussex in England have signed a contract covering two years' residence of a young Canadian organic chemist, who will work on developing a cheap synthetic stimulant that can cause the seed germination of a parasitic weed called striga, and lead to its eventual control. Dr. Gerald Rosebery, a member of the Department of Chemistry, McGill University, will work on the project under the guidance of Dr. Alan Johnson, Professor of Chemistry at Sussex University, Brighton, England.

Striga, is a parasite of various grasses such as sorghum, maize and sugar cane whose seeds can remain in the soil for as long as 20 years without germinating if its host plants are not present. But when the host is planted and starts to grow a chemical called strigol is secreted by the roots of the host plant, which stimulates the striga seeds to germinate; the seeds put out roots which enter the roots of the host, and thus striga draws all its nutrition from the host.

Dr. Rosebery will be carrying out research on the potency of the chemical strigol and other chemicals that behave like strigol with the object of developing an economic means of producing a stimulant artificially. Farmers in tropical countries could then apply the strigol-like chemical to their fields when no host plant grows. All the

striga plants would germinate and, having no host plants from which to draw their nutrients, would die before pushing above the surface of the ground. The use of this stimulant, with a cotton rotation, might lead to a reduction of the load of striga in the soil.

#### Importance in the tropics

Successful development of a synthetic stimulant would be of considerable importance in tropical agriculture, particularly in the semi-arid tropics, since striga represents a serious constraint to the production of sorghum. Sorghum is the principal subsistence cereal grain for more than 300 million people, and the International Development Research Centre, whose agricultural program aims at improving conditions in the semi-arid tropics, is supporting some ten other research projects on aspects of sorghum improvement.

This research into the chemistry of strigol could not be carried out in Canada, since the importation of striga seed into Canada is prohibited. The IDRC allocation of \$28,700 (of which all but \$2,000 is being administered by the Centre) will cover not only Dr. Rosebery's residence at the University of Sussex, but also the cost of a visit to Nigeria at a time when striga damage is greatest in the northern states of that country.

### Diplomats as university visitors

The Department of External Affairs announced recently the secondment of Miss Margaret Meagher and Mr. Jacques Dupuis as Foreign Service Visitors to the University of Dalhousie and the University of Montreal, respectively, for the academic year 1973-74.

These assignments are part of the Department's Academic Relations Program for increasing understanding and co-operation between Canadian academics interested in foreign affairs and the Department. This is the fifth consecutive year in which the Department has assigned foreign service officers to Canadian universities.

Miss Meagher, a graduate of Dal-

housie University, has recently returned from a posting as Canadian Ambassador to Sweden. Among other posts she held previously are those as Canadian Ambassador to Israel and Austria, and Canadian High Commissioner in Kenya, Uganda and Cyprus. She was also, in 1964, Chairman of the Board of Governors for the International Atomic Energy Agency.

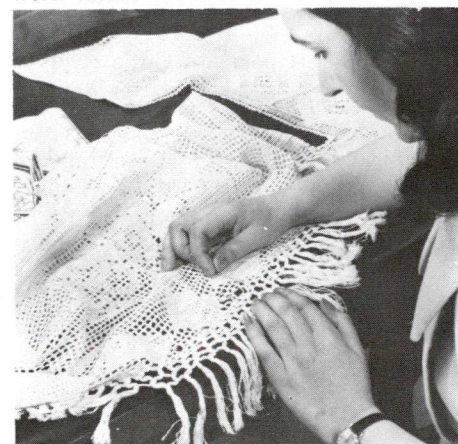
A graduate of Laval University and a former member of the Quebec Bar, Mr. Dupuis is also a senior officer who was until recently Minister-Counsellor at the Canadian Embassy in Paris. He had previous postings in Ankara and in Tokyo, and was seconded for some time to the Canadian International Development Agency.

### Conservation Institute on the move

The opening of the Canadian Conservation Institute's "Progress in Conservation" exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery, British Columbia, on June 22 coincided with the start of the National Conservation Survey in that province. The exhibition displays the advanced scientific technology used in the examination and conservation of works of art and historical artifacts. The National Conservation Survey, which will assess the conservation needs of the collections in each province, is being carried out by the Canadian Conservation Institute, a branch of the National Museums of Canada, in co-operation with provincial museum professionals.

In a similar survey just completed in the Atlantic provinces, a survey team reviewed collections in 16 museums and archives, identifying problems requiring immediate attention as well as outlining a plan of action for conservation. The Atlantic Provinces survey was done at the request of the Regional Advisory Committee of the Canadian Conservation Institute, composed of eight of the leading museum directors, curators and archivists in the region.

The British Columbia survey, to be carried out at the request of the Pacific Regional Advisory Committee of the Institute, will review the collections of over 15 museums, galleries and institutions in the province and will also include the inspection of several sites with collections of items important to the cultural heritage of Canadian native peoples. Members of the survey team will discuss on local television and at various institutions the work of the Institute.



Restoring a nineteenth century cloth.