INSTITUTES OF THE
ROYAL NETHERLANDS ACADEMY
OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
PROGRESS REPORT 1975

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INSTITUTES
OF THE
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History of the Institute

In 1905, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences applied to the Dutch Government for permission to found an institute for brain research. The government consented and on June 8th, 1909 the Netherlands Central Institute for Brain Research was seated in a wing of the then newly erected Department of Anatomy and Embryology of the Municipal University of Amsterdam. The institute was built under the direction of L. Bolk, professor of anatomy and embryology, who, together with the neurologist professor C. Winkler, was one of the most important supporters of the institute. The first director was Dr. C. U. Ariëns Kappers who became world-famous as a comparative neuroanatomist. After some years he was appointed professor of neuro-anatomy at the University of Amsterdam. After his death, in 1946, Kappers was succeeded by professor B. Brouwer, who previously had held the chair of neurology at the University of Amsterdam. Brouwer was primarily interested in neuropathology. During his management Dr. J. Drooglever Fortuyn, later on professor of neurology at the University of Groningen, introduced electrophysiology at the institute.

After the untimely death of Brouwer, in 1949, the Dutch government agreed that the institute should be reorganized and extended. Thus it became possible to found some new divisions enabling the institute to perform multidisciplinary research in the broad field of neurosciences, which was in accordance with its original aim.

In 1952, professor S. T. Bok, who previously had held the chair of histology at the University of Leiden, was appointed director. His merit has been further multidisciplinary research at the institute on a large scale. He was one of the first researchers in the quantitative analysis of the brain, especially of the cerebral cortex, who earned great fame. After his retirement he was succeeded, in 1962, by J. Ariëns Kappers, previous professor of anatomy at the University of Groningen, who at the same time was appointed professor of neuroanatomy at the University of Amsterdam.

In 1964, the institute moved to a provisional, but much larger building and some additional barracks have since been built.

The institute is a governmental institution, with a total number of 72 staff places from which 35 for research workers. Its financial support is supplied by the government. It is managed by a director under the supervision of a board of professors of various disciplines at Dutch universities. Members of the board are appointed by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences and Letters.

Recent developments

When Prof. Kappers decided to retire, Dr. H. G. J. M. Kuijpers, professor of anatomy at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, was nominated by the Academy to succeed him as director of the institute. On the retirement date (August 1st, 1975) the succession had not been effectuated, however, since discussions with the government were still in progress regarding a new building, guarantees for the budget and
research facilities for Prof. Kuijpers research group. At the request of the government, Prof. Kappers remained on as temporary director. On August 15th, 1975, the members of the advisory board were informed unexpectedly that the government had decided to close down the institute as an economy measure. This decision (taken without having consulted any scientific body) was announced to the members of the institute on August 27th. A stream of national and international protests against this measure along with wide support for the efforts of the institute staff persuaded the Dutch parliament to request the government to reconsider the decision.

In the meantime Dr. D. F. Swaab, member of the staff of the institute, had been appointed as acting director. An independent committee - consisting of Prof. Dr. H. B. G. Casimir (chairman), Prof. Dr. D. de Wied and Prof. Dr. J. Joosse - is currently investigating the possibilities for continuation of the research work of the institute.

Research

The institute's research had been concentrated until recently mainly within the (discipline oriented) departments, e.g., neurophysiology, neurohistology and neurochemistry. The members of the various departments are listed below. This "horizontal" distribution according to techniques still has value, of course, especially where extensive common use of expensive equipment is involved. In addition, such departments gain importance because of the increasing demand of technical "service" to members of other departments. A drawback of this "horizontal" organization, however, has been all along the tendency for a large number of fragmented problems, that were often only very indirectly related, to be studied in a rather isolated fashion.

In the last few years, therefore, an alternative "vertical" way of collaboration has gained greatly in importance. This type of organization is centered around a relatively small number of research projects, in which investigators from different disciplines (biologists, physicists, biochemists, M. D.'s etc.) as well as from different departments are working together. For several projects this multidisciplinary collaboration has developed to a point where it is no longer desirable to present a progress report organized on the basis of the departments.

The scientific staff is striving to further stimulate this new approach in the direction of a central theme for the institute as a whole, which would serve to unify the diverse projects, or sub-themes. For the organization of conferences, work visits to foreign laboratories, lectures, foreign visitors, etc., the reader is referred to the year book (1975) of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

D. F. Swaab

DEPARTMENTS

Director: Prof. Dr. J. Ariëns Kappers (until 1.8.'75 and temporary until 1.11.'75)
Dr. D. F. Swaab (temporary from 1.11.'75)

Department of Experimental Neurology
Head: Drs. P. A. de Groot
Dr. J. C. de Valois (until Dec. '75)
Drs. C. V. de Blécourt
Dr. J. P. Muizelaar (military serv.)
Dr. J. P. Schadé (until 1.1.'75)
Dr. W. van Emde Boas (until 1.1.'75)
Drs. J. H. de Groen (until 1.4.'75)

Department of Comparative Neurophysiology
Head: Dr. M. A. Corner
Dr. R. E. Baker
Drs. H. A. A. de Jong
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