Professor Dr A. C. Schuffelen

Adriaan Cornelis Schuffelen was born in Eindhoven (Gestel) in 1908. There he attended primary and secondary schools. His scientific studies were at the State University of Utrecht majoring in pharmacy and analytical chemistry. In 1934 he obtained his degree of doctorandus and in 1940 his doctorate in the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics with a thesis entitled 'The quantitative analysis with flame spectra and its accuracy'.

In 1930 he was appointed to the research staff at the Laboratory of Soils and Fertilizers of the Agricultural University in Wageningen, where he worked under the supervision of Professor J. Hudig. In 1934 he spent some time at the institute of Professor G. Wiegner in Zürich. In 1939 he was offered the post of Head of the Chemistry Department in the Soil Science Institute at Buitenzorg (now Bogor), Indonesia. However World War II prevented him from taking up this post.

In 1946 he was appointed reader and in 1949 professor of Agricultural Chemistry in the Agricultural University at Wageningen. His first concern was the building of new premises for his department because the old building was irreparably damaged during the war. In 1957, after many difficulties, the new building could be occupied. Originally, his research and teaching had to cover the whole of soil physics, chemistry and fertility, and plant nutrition. After the appointment of Dr G. H. Bolt in 1957, soil physics and soil chemistry could be transferred. In 1965, the soil fertility section was handed over to Dr A. van Diest, allowing Professor Schuffelen to concentrate on plant nutrition. Even so, his interests remained comprehensive.

In 1951 he spent three months in the USA to study the system of soil analysis used there. In 1952 he initiated the Fertilizer Colloquium. Members of this Colloquium – graduates of the Agricultural University – usually meet four times a year to discuss different aspects of modern fertilizers use, and attend a two-day excursion at the end of each season. This may be considered an early from of post-university training. Also the 'A and B courses' (post-university courses) of the Royal (Netherlands) Society for Agricultural Science had his great interest.

After attending the first Conference on Application of Atomic Energy for Peaceful Purposes in Geneva in 1955, he suggested the foundation of an Institute for Application of Atomic Energy in Agriculture (ITAL). This proposal found a ready response from the Ministery of Agriculture, and Professor Schuffelen was charged with elaborating this plan. When ITAL opened in 1957, he became a member of its board and Chairman of its Research Council, later transformed into the International Scientific Advisory Commission.

In 1957 he again visited the USA where for three months he studied problems in application of atomic energy in agriculture.

During the academic year 1957/1958 Professor Schuffelen was invited to the 'Francqui Chair' as guest professor at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. In 1973 he was also guest lecturer in Munich-Weihenstephan.

In 1962 he attended the Soil Science Congress in New Zealand, visiting Israel, Egypt, India, Australia, Hawaii and California on the way.

Professor Schuffelen has been the president of the Royal (Netherlands) Society for Agricultural Science and Chairman of Commission II (Soil Chemistry) of the International

Soil Science Society. He has been a member of many national and international committees dealing with soil science and fertilizers, of committees on application of atomic energy, of the Scientific Council for Nuclear Energy, of the (Netherlands) Agricultural Advisory Council, and of the Consulting Committee of the Biological Division of Euratom.

Through his travels abroad and his lectures, Professor Schuffelen has built up many international contacts and made many friends. In particular, his membership of the International Advisory Board of the International Potash Institute, Berne, has allowed him to maintain useful contacts with colleagues in different countries during annual Board meetings.

His own scientific research has been mainly on ion absorption by plant roots in relation to ion activities in solutions and in soil. He also investigated potassium fixation phenomena and the chemistry of humic compounds. His wider interests have included the application of radio-active isotopes in agricultural research and the role of fertilizers in the world food supply.

Professor Schuffelen has written more than a hundred scientific papers. More than thirty research students have completed their doctoral theses under his supervision.