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Lovanium Univ

60977

LOVANUM  
UNIVERSITY -  
EMERGENCY  
GENERAL  
SUPPORT

It was, on motion,  
RESOLVED that the sum of Two hundred fifty thousand dollars  
RF 60172 (\$250,000), or as much thereof as may be necessary,  
be, and it hereby is, appropriated to LOVANUM  
UNIVERSITY, Léopoldville, Republic of the Congo, for  
the general purposes of the University, this sum to  
be available during the period of one year beginning  
October 1, 1960.

Extended to Apr 30, '62  
by E.6152

The above action was taken after an oral presentation of the  
project by Dr. Morison and following discussion.

Among the considerations presented were:

General (Expanded Program in Asia, Latin America, the Middle  
East, and Africa)

Previous Interest: Since 1958 The Rockefeller Foundation has  
appropriated \$433,760 to Lovanium University. Of this amount  
\$230,000 was for the general development of the Medical School,  
\$175,000 for the School of Nursing, principally for construc-  
tion and equipment of the Nursing School building and residence,  
and \$2,460 for equipment in the Departments of Anatomy and  
Histology of the Medical School. The sum of \$26,300 provided  
for the costs of x-ray equipment for the Institute of Agriculture.

General Description: As is now only too well known, the Belgian  
authorities delayed overlong in providing advanced education for  
the people of the Congo. Not until 1949, when what is now  
Lovanum University was established as an Institut d'Utilité  
Publique under Congolese law, was the need for higher education  
taken seriously. Once started, however, the new institution at  
Léopoldville progressed surprisingly rapidly and was recognized  
by the Congolese Government as a full university in 1956. The

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physical plant currently represents a total investment of approximately \$15,000,000, 80 per cent of which has been provided by the Congolese Government from appropriations voted by the Belgian parliament; the remainder has come from private industry and foundations. The intellectual and spiritual excellence of the place is largely the result of the interest of the University of Louvain in Belgium. During the first ten years of its existence, over half the Board of Trustees of Lovanium University was drawn from the faculty at the University of Louvain and its meetings were held in Belgium. In anticipation of independence, however, the Board was transferred to Léopoldville and it is expected that by the end of 1960 a majority of the Board will be natives of the Republic of the Congo. For the time being, however, it is expected that the faculty of Louvain will continue to be responsible for choosing the principal faculty members of the Léopoldville institution.

Although the Roman Catholic influence on the institution is obvious, from the outset it has been conducted on a non-sectarian, multiracial basis. No questions are asked about the religious affiliations of either students or faculty although staff members must agree not to commit overt acts against "the philosophical principle that led to the creation of Lovanium University." Last year's student body of approximately 500 included some 60 students of European origin, and race relations within the University have always been good. Academic standards have been maintained at a high level and the degrees granted are recognized as fully comparable to those in Belgium itself. The Rector of the University, Msgr. L. P. Gillon, has an established reputation as an atomic physicist, and the teaching staff of over 100 individuals reflects an informed concern for the maintenance of high scholarly standards. All the major branches of knowledge

are represented within the nine faculties, the principal emphasis being given to medicine, the political and social sciences, philosophy and letters, and the natural sciences.

The potential importance of the University to the future of the Congo appears to be recognized by the local population, and it has been a great satisfaction to discover that neither the physical plant nor the personnel of the institution has been in any way molested during the disturbances that began shortly after the announcement of independence. Even more convincing evidence of the peculiar importance of the institution is the fact that the present "Commission" now responsible for conducting the affairs of the Congolese Government is entirely made up of recent graduates or current students at the University.

The University continued to operate through the disturbances of June and July and closed its academic year as anticipated on July 25. The European faculty returned home on leave at that time and all but five are planning to return for the opening date of the new term which begins on October 25. Some decrease in student enrolment is expected because of the probability that Katanga and one or two other provinces may prefer not to send students to what they regard as another country, but everything is being planned on the assumption that the institution will be allowed to operate more or less normally. The present chaotic state of the finances of the new Congolese Government makes it impossible to guarantee the operation of the University from this source for the coming year. Rector Gillon has, therefore, approached the Belgian Government, The Ford Foundation, and The Rockefeller Foundation for a sum sufficient to underwrite the expenses incident to maintaining the European faculty in Léopoldville during this period.

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Finances: The budget of the University for the year 1959-1960 was \$2,500,000. Owing to uncertainties about student enrollment it is impossible to estimate the total needs of the institution at this time but Rector Gillon feels that it can get by on a minimum basis with a total of approximately \$1,500,000 in hard currency to provide for the European faculty.

The Belgian Government has indicated its willingness to provide approximately one-third of the previous budget or \$800,000 for the year 1960-1961.

The sum of \$250,000 has been received from The Ford Foundation. If the proposed amount of \$250,000 requested from The Rockefeller Foundation is granted, approximately \$200,000 would remain to be collected from other hard currency sources. As the situation within the Congo itself becomes stabilized, it is hoped that the local government will be able to meet a considerable portion of the local currency needs. In view of the very close personal association between the University and the present Government "Commission," Rector Gillon has preferred not to approach the latter at the present time for a specific guarantee.

Comment: Although it is impossible to predict the future course of events in the Congo, there seems no doubt at all about the potentialities of the University for future development. Unless the whole area reverts to barbarism, some institution of higher learning will be essential. Even though the proposed grant carries very obvious risks, it seems much wiser to try to maintain an institution already in being than to let it die and incur the necessity of beginning all over again at a later date.

Future Implications: It is clearly understood both by Rector Gillon and the officers of the Foundation that the present

request is being considered purely on an emergency basis. It would carry no implications of renewal. Nevertheless, in view of the great importance of the University not only to the future of the Congo but to all of Africa south of the Sahara, the officers will keep in close touch with developments and may wish to recommend grants for specific purposes in the future.

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