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STORY - THE MENACE OF KARIBA WEED - SALVINIA AURICULATA.

The appearance of the weed SALVINIA AURICULATA in vast masses along certain sections of Lake Kariba has recently attracted world-wide prominence and the seriousness of the situation is a matter of grave concern to the authorities.

This "Kariba Weed" as it is now commonly referred to presently covers an area of about 200 square miles of lake surface.

The weed is a small weedlike plant of about 3 to 4 inches in diameter with masses of roots which become entwined with other plants on the lake surface to form a large floating mass-like body. Thousands of these plants become entwined in a solid floating island covering sheltered areas of the lake.

The weed is extremely rich in nutrient and vigorous in growth as it thrives from the rich soil and rotting vegetation being submerged for the first time by the rising waters. After forming up in large masses, the winds and prevailing currents move it off in vast masses downstream, and it is here that it presents a grave hazard to the boating and fishing activity on the lake, and also some ~~xxxxxx~~ threat to the giant hydro-electric generators.

The Authorities, well aware of the menace, have the position in hand, but to date no successful way of destroying or removing it from the lake has been found. There are 3 possible ways of controlling the weed 1) By mechanical means such as dredging 2) By herbicides or plant killers 3) By natural means such as the introduction of small animal or fish life that would possibly thrive on the weed.

Not only are scientists working on a means of controlling the weed but also on a scheme of harvesting the weed and utilising it for the production of wood pulp products and /or fertiliser and cattle food.

Intensive research is currently being conducted by overseas authorities and experts and by the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. To date their combined efforts have brought little success.

There is very little doubt that unless some form of control is brought about without delay, a substantial area of normally navigable part of the lake will become completely inaccessible - and as a result the fishing and boating facilities will become seriously impaired.

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