

THE NEXT LEPROSY CONGRESS.

TO THE EDITOR:

I may be a lone voice crying in the wilderness, but I have been surprised not to read in our JOURNAL a lot of complaints about the Cuba Conference. In my opinion, too many articles on too many trivial subjects were delivered in too short a time, and there was too little time for discussion. At our next Congress I would like to find the articles submitted throughly weeded by an Editorial (or Program) Committee, so that only those judged worthwhile may be inflicted on our ears. I suggest, too, that each section should have a symposium to which selected authors should be asked for their contributions, and that ample time should be left for discussion.

What about publishing this protest and asking for opinions on the subject?

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A. R. DAVISON
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TO THE EDITOR:

With regard to the Havana Conference I think that the experience there, as I have learned of it, confirms the impression which I formed at Cairo, namely, that these international leprosy gatherings attempt to do the impossible. They attempt, within a few days, to reconcile the irreconcilable, and to do work which would probably take years to accomplish. All of this is attempted, moreover, by a very large and heterogenous gathering of people, some of whom know little about leprosy, whereas what is needed to solve some of the problems is a small body of experts. I think that the usefulness of the general type of international congress is very limited indeed. I am not sure that it should not be just a meeting place for different workers, for the reading of papers—selected papers—and for discussions.

I think that the whole program should be fixed before the congress ever meets. Certain sessions should be devoted to certain subjects, and the openers of the discussions should be carefully selected, as well as the people to read the papers. I believe this is the form that most international specialist gatherings take.

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[The foregoing comments on the Havana Congress, one by a participant in it and the other by one who did not attend but who awaited news of the affair with all the more anticipation, are the most incisive of many which have been heard or seen. As suggested by Doctor Davison, other opinions on the subject are invited, for publication in this department.

It may be said that the organizers of the Havana Congress, both those representing the Cuban hosts and those from afar, were fully aware that with more experience the affair might have been better in important ways. The handicap of distance, if no other factor, limited the effectiveness of cooperation in planning between the local organizing group and officials of the International Leprosy Association who had had personal experience with the Cairo Congress. Not a few of the participants are aware that, after the members of the Congress had actually convened, a certain small element under the vehemently reiterated slogan of "democracy" challenged the authority of the Executive Committee to make decisions, in consequence of which certain plans were abandoned.

Before the Congress was over Doctor Oteiza, the president, suggested that the executive group should prepare and publish a sort of report on the problems of organizing and running such a meeting, with suggestions which might be helpful to those who would bear the responsibilities of future meetings. No such report has been prepared, and under the circumstances it is unlikely that it will be done. That such problems are general, affecting all such gatherings, is evidenced by the action which has been taken under the auspices of WHO and UNESCO to create a central bureau to advise and aid in the setting up of medical congresses, as recounted elsewhere in this issue (see p. 104). Nevertheless, contributions pertaining to the specific problems of international leprosy congresses, as suggested above, should be useful in future years.—EDITOR.]