

CORRESPONDENCE

This department is provided for the publication of informal communications which are of interest because they are informative or stimulating, and for the discussion of controversial matters.

6 SOCIAL WELFARE AT MADRID

TO THE EDITOR:

In India there has been some discussion about the inclusion in the agenda of the forthcoming Madrid Congress of a detailed consideration of the social welfare aspects of leprosy. As a matter of fact, a circular letter has been sent around to several of our workers suggesting that they make representations in the matter.

In common with other leprosy workers, I realize the great importance of the social welfare aspect of the leprosy problem. All necessary and possible means should certainly be adopted for the solution of the various phases of this problem, and favorable conditions for this work should be created by establishing a strong public opinion on the subject. However, I doubt if the subject could, with advantage, be discussed in detail at international level. The extent of the problem, the social customs, the economic conditions, and the available facilities differ so markedly in the various countries at present affected with leprosy that it would not be possible to lay down a common line of action to be followed by all countries. For example, the amount of social assistance available in Brazil makes possible there an approach to the problem which would not be possible in most other countries. In these latter countries it is no doubt desirable to attempt to increase progressively the available social assistance, so that the needful can be done.

There is no difference of opinion regarding the need for dealing with the social aspects of the leprosy problem in all affected countries, but the solution must vary from country to country according to the prevailing conditions. Efforts should unquestionably be made in each country to improve these conditions. However, in view of the marked difference in the prevailing conditions, I think that detailed consideration of the social aspects of the leprosy problem is a matter more suited

for discussion at a national level than at an international level.
School of Tropical Medicine DR. DHARMENDRA
Calcutta 12, India *Leprosy Research Worker*

[Correspondence received at this office, in part from nonmedical workers but also from certain physicians, indicates that considerable interest is being taken in the matter of inclusion of the social welfare of leprosy in the agenda of the Madrid congress. One correspondent has suggested that if there is to be set up a committee to make a report on the subject, it should comprise individuals with various points of view, including medical as well as social workers. The aspect of the matter brought out in the letter of Dr. Dharmendra, above, seems worthy of consideration. It seems probable that if papers in this field are offered they will be included in the program, as stated in our last issue, and the indications are that there also will be a committee on the social aspects of leprosy. Mr. Perry Burgess, president of the Leonard Wood Memorial, received from Dr. Dharmendra a copy of the above letter (addressed in its original form to Prof. T. N. Jagadisan, Mylapore, Madras) and has requested that his reply to it be printed.—EDITOR.]

DEAR DR. DHARMENDRA:

Thank you for your courtesy in sending to me, under date of March 9, copy of your letter to Professor Jagadisan. I agree in principle with your comment. It is not my thought that social and rehabilitation aspects of this disease in which we are interested should be a subject of general discussion before the sessions of the Congress. It is my belief, however, that much could be accomplished, even if it were only a better understanding of the different conditions in the various countries, if a commission were appointed at the outset of the Congress composed of representatives of the various countries, particularly those where the situation greatly differs. An excellent example of this is the one that you point out—that is, the differences between India and Brazil.

I hope you will agree with me that nothing would be lost and perhaps there would be some gain with such a procedure.

Sincerely yours,

Geneva, Ohio

PERRY BURGESS

President

Leonard Wood Memorial