

6 THE SET-UP OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

When the International Leprosy Association was organized in Manila in 1931 by the members of the Leonard Wood Memorial Round-Table Conference, it was set up on a regional basis with Eastern and Western Sections. It was not expected that the Association could, by itself or otherwise, arrange for conventions of world scope, but it was hoped that the sections might hold sessions in connection with meetings of other organizations in their regions.

No such section meeting has ever been held. For the eastern region it was thought that such meetings might be held in connection with the congresses of the Far Eastern Association of Tropical Medicine, but very few leprosy workers attended those which were held subsequently. The All-India Leprosy Conference, which workers from other countries have

attended, have been held with no relationship with the I.L.A. In the western region the Pan-American Conferences similarly have been organized independently.

The section officers have never functioned as such in any way. Although they are *ex-officio* members of the general Association group, the Section Councillors are not. Nevertheless, at the leprosy congresses all officers and council members present, whether general or sectional, have played a part on an equal footing. The section officers and councillors have never been nominated and elected separately by their respective membership groups; all positions have been dealt with *en bloc* at the Association meetings, so there has been no distinction in that respect.

The upshot of all this is that the present structure is wholly artificial, the division useless. A proposal has therefore been made that, at the Association meeting to be held at the time of the Madrid congress, the division into sections be abolished and that the features of the constitution and by-laws which provide for or result from that division be eliminated.

According to the present regulations¹ the Association itself has four officers, two of them *ex officio*, and 14 general councillors, of whom 4 are *ex officio* and 10 elected as such. This makes a total of 18 men on the General Council, not counting the editor of THE JOURNAL who is also an *ex officio* member. In addition, each of the two sections has two councillors who have no place in the general Association group. Thus there is a total of 22 positions of one kind and another in the organization. At present, because of vacancies, only 18 individuals now are concerned with leprosy work.

If the sections should be abolished and the Association's four officers be elected as such, and if as proposed the number of Councillors elected as such be increased from 10 to 15 to obtain wider representation, no one who now holds any function in the organization and is eligible would need to be dropped because of the change of set-up. Furthermore, there would then be no differences of status, as there now are between general and section councillors.

Upon receipt of these proposals Dr. E. Muir, general secretary of the Association, transmitted them to all members of the General and Sectional Councils in good standing with the

¹ The constitution and by-laws were last published in THE JOURNAL in 1949 (vol. 17, pp. 415-423), with later corrections (18 (1950) 531).

request that they register opinions as to whether or not the proposed changes should be made. This inquiry was accompanied by a memorandum showing the alterations of the constitution and by-laws that would be required in that event. At the same time he sent out certain other proposals for changes of the regulations to be presented to the meeting at Madrid.

All of the officers and Council members who responded—and only one did not—expressed agreement with the proposal to abolish the Sections, under the stated conditions. As for the other proposed changes of the constitution and by-laws, 10 have agreed to them definitely or “in general,” 5 others are apparently in agreement, 1 withheld opinion, and 3 made no statement, presumably by oversight. No one indicated disagreement although one suggested a minor alteration. Whatever may be done about those less important proposals, it is to be expected—unless unexpected opposition develops among the members at large—that after the Madrid meeting the Association will have a simple, straightforward structure with all four officers elected as such and fifteen elected Councillors all of equal status.

—H. W. Wade