(d) While many delegates would not read papers, all would have a chance of putting forward their views in discussion. It may be that some would not attend the congress who would have attended if they could read papers. We hope that would not occur. In any case, I believe that the method outlined above, perhaps with some slight modifications, is the only way to get down to real work and make definite progress. Several workers whom I have consulted are of the same opinion. In fact, this is nothing new; most congresses in recent years have been conducted along similar lines.

—E. Muir

SYMPOSIA

The modern symposium is a far cry from that of the Greeks, whose symposion was an after-dinner period of compotation and conversation. The symposion has evolved. In our society, one descendant is the cocktail party, which, while it retains the ancient conviviality, has lost some of the original intellectual function. Another is the scientific symposium of our day, which emphasizes the formal exchange of ideas by authorities. The best of such symposia are timely, definitive, and instructive in summarizing what is known up to the moment when the session opens. Current knowledge is surveyed for the benefit of teachers and research workers, new ideas are introduced, and new lines of research are suggested. A lively interchange of opinion often occurs—to the benefit of all.

If we could arrange an ideal symposium of the modern type, what should we work toward? Some 9 or 10 months before the scheduled date, the program chairman and his advisers should agree on the subject—one of considerable interest and with new developments, and one that would not conflict with any others being arranged elsewhere. The subtopics should be outlined in logical sequence: to develop each, the best man in the field should be selected. Each proposed speaker’s specific competence and fluency would outweigh all other considerations.

Immediately thereafter, each invited person should receive an outline of the symposium—topics, subtopics, and chosen speakers—so that he may appreciate its scope and stature. Months before the meeting, full abstracts of the papers should be exchanged among the participants. Such arrangements would lead to a well-integrated program, devoid of both duplication and conspicuous gaps. Scheduled discussion leaders often enhance a symposium. These also should receive the same information in

1 This editorial, which appeared in the February 17, 1956, issue of Science, the weekly publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, is reprinted by permission. The original title was “Symposia in Utopia,” changed here because Utopia was mentioned only in a paragraph not reproduced since it has no relationship to the problems of the International Leprosy Association in connection with the setting up of the scientific sessions of leprosy congresses.—Editor.

2 The period of time here indicated obviously pertains to meetings within a given country. To arrange such symposia on an international basis would take longer.

—Editor.
advance, so that they would be prepared to participate effectively in the program.

With this degree of preparation, both the “elder statesmen” and the younger research workers could contribute, more readily than they may at present, to the interplay of thought and the exploration of new approaches to research. A 3-hour session at a symposium like this would not seem long, for the logical progression of ideas and the clash of well-informed opinion would make time pass rapidly.

With a view to publication each symposium paper should be complete with references and footnotes at the time of its presentation.

RAYMOND L. TAYLOR, A. A. A. S.

COORDINATED STUDIES ON LEPROSY AND TUBERCULOSIS

The World Health Organization, either directly or through its representative in America, the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau, is carrying out in several countries a series of investigations on tuberculosis. A special division of WHO, the Tuberculosis Research Office (TRO) is supervising these studies, working for the most part in close collaboration with official or private institutions of other nations.

In this program of work there are two questions that especially hold the interest of the WHO experts: The effects of BCG vaccination, and the tuberculin reaction.

With respect to BCG, at present WHO is directing an intensive vaccination campaign in various countries, in some of which leprosy is endemic. Regarding the study of tuberculin reactions the WHO experts, in collaboration with specialists of North America, India, and Denmark, have carried on a large-scale investigation in certain countries of Europe, America, Africa and Asia, in healthy individuals and in tuberculosis patients, in order to elucidate among other things the specificity of this biological test. The results obtained so far have indicated that, besides the specific positive reactions provoked by tuberculosis infection, there are nonspecific positive reactions probably induced by other acid-fast bacilli. Because of the increasing importance which the study of the immunological relationships between leprosy and tuberculosis has acquired in leprology, these investigations have aroused particular interest among leprosy workers.

In fact, because the hypothesis has been established on certain grounds the leprosy and tuberculosis may be antagonistic diseases, and because it has been suggested that BCG may serve as a preventive agent in leprosy, and because it has been demonstrated that there is a certain relationship between the lepromin and tuberculin reactions, it would be highly profitable if pathologists and leprologists should join hands in the study of these problems, working in close collaboration. This sug-