

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LEPROSY

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL LEPROSY ASSOCIATION

PUBLISHED WITH THE AID OF THE
LEONARD WOOD MEMORIAL

Publication Office: School of Medicine, Tulane University,
1430 Tulane Avenue, New Orleans 12, Louisiana
Entered at the Post Office at New Orleans as second-class matter.

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 2

APRIL-JUNE, 1957

EDITORIALS

Editorials are written by members of the Editorial Board, and opinions expressed are those of the writers.

INTERIM PANELS IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEW DELHI CONGRESS

Since the last International Congress this department has carried two editorials, by Chaussinaud¹ and Muir,² which recalled certain deficiencies and criticisms of past congresses and proposed changes of set-up and procedures designed to improve the scientific sessions of the next congress. Both of those notes should be read by all who are interested in the matter. One feature which has been adopted is discussed here.

Chaussinaud pointed out, besides other pertinent things, how undesirable it is that the technical committees should meet during the periods of the scientific sessions, thus depriving those sessions of the presence of many experts, and resulting in hasty preparation of their reports. He suggested that the committees—obviously to be set up beforehand—should arrive at agreements by correspondence and then meet for a day or two before the opening of the Congress to finish their reports.

Muir, considering primarily the setting up of a number of symposia (technically "open symposia") on the principal topics to be prepared by a limited number of selected speakers, proposed the establishment of *panels* of selected persons to prepare by correspondence the material for those symposia during the year before the Congress convenes. These panels have been appointed by action of the Council of the Association (see News item in this issue) and have begun to function as planned.

The subjects with which these panels will deal are for the most part those which at previous congresses were dealt with by so-called technical

1. CHAUSSINAUD, R. A propos de l'organisation du VIIe Congress International de Leprologie. Internat. J. Leprosy **23** (1955) 441-443 (editorial).
2. MUIR, E. Congress, conference, symposium. Internat. J. Leprosy **24** (1956) 780-783 (editorial).

committees appointed after the meetings had convened. Those committees of selected experts have always worked under pressure, often during periods when the scientific meetings were in session—thus depriving, as pointed out by Chaussinaud—those meetings of their presence—and little time was available for the preparation of their reports for consideration by the final plenary session.

The plan of interim panels is an adaptation of a scheme employed by the International Congress of Radiology. The radiologists have no international society, but at each congress they set up a sort of international committee which—apparently through a select executive committee—serves much the same function as an association so far as concerns preparation for the next meeting. The feature here referred to is that, well before the time of a meeting, there are chosen what they call “international commissions” to do preparatory spade work on the main subjects to be dealt with at the meeting. In a report of a recent congress it is said that, during a period of about two years, these commissions had reached substantial agreements on all the main points, and “this alone made it possible for the actual meeting . . . to arrive at definite conclusions.”

An intended function of the panels set up in preparation for the coming Leprosy Congress is that, by correspondence, they shall attempt to decide in what ways the reports of the corresponding technical committees of the last congress should be modified in the light of present knowledge. It is expected that they will use those previous reports as their points of departure, not attempting to prepare completely new reports unless they consider the previous ones to be wholly unsatisfactory. It is what should be set down as demonstrated fact or considered opinion that is important, rather than form. It is anticipated that the persons invited to serve on the panels will do so as a contribution to the general effort, whether or not they consider it likely that they themselves will be able to attend the Congress. The product of the efforts of each panel will be taken to the Congress by its chairman, or, if he should be unable to attend, by some member designated by him who will be going.

Now, the appointment of these interim panels is entirely within the competence of the Council of the International Leprosy Association. The Association cannot, however, by itself alone determine who shall constitute the technical committees of the Congress itself—if this Congress is to be organized as previous congresses have been, with a general council made up of equal numbers of members of (a) the Association Council present and of (b) the local Organizing Committee or persons designated by that group. One of the functions of the general council of a congress is to nominate members of the technical committees, subject to ratification by the first plenary session. It is to be expected that at the next Congress the persons who served on interim Panels and who will be able to attend the Congress will constitute the nuclei of the corresponding technical committees. The panels as such will cease to function as such then, except for

the symposium sessions. The balance of the memberships of the technical committees will be determined at and by the congress. The total number per committee at Madrid (not counting a few "co-opted members") was nine, which proved to be ample and in general not too unwieldy. It is believed that that number should not be exceeded at the next congress.

The technical committees as constituted by the Congress will be expected to use as the basis of their deliberations the recommendations of the interim panels, or their draft reports if such have been prepared. It is expected that those recommendations or reports will take cognizance of new knowledge such as may be expected to be incorporated in papers to be read at the Congress, which will eliminate one of the deficiencies of the system followed in the past. Preparation of the final report should take much less time than heretofore, and the scientific sessions should therefore be less deprived of the presence of those experts, who ought to participate in the discussions.

At the time of writing the proposals provide for seven panels, as below.

Classification

Therapy

Epidemiology and control (general)

Immunology (general)

Evaluation of BCG vaccination in prophylaxis

Bacteriology and pathology

Social aspects

These subjects will be those of the symposium sessions of the Congress, with the probable exception that the item "Evaluation of BCG vaccination in prophylaxis" will be merged with either immunology or control. The selected speakers for each symposium will naturally be chosen from among the members of the corresponding panel—how many and who, to be decided according to circumstances by the panels and their chairman and the executive officers of the Association.

Announcements about the submission of papers, both those solicited for the symposium and those proffered for sessions to be devoted to miscellaneous papers, and about other details of the congress, will be made in due course.

—H. W. WADE