

THE ASSOCIATION PANELS, THE CONGRESS COMMITTEES, AND THE
TECHNICAL REPORTS

One thing about the technical reports of the leprosy congresses that nobody can dispute is that they should be impartial and without bias. Also obvious is the fact that changes made in any congress should be well considered, and limited to what are clearly indicated by developments since the last congress. The world at large can have no respect for recommendations that are periodically subject to radical change due to individual bias or group preferences, and unless care is taken that phase of our congress work will fall from repute and be of no avail.

These considerations apply by far the most conspicuously to the report on classification. In that one, alone, the congress endeavors to lay down a definite system suitable for world-wide application. It happens that with respect to that subject, alone, there have developed distinctive regional views and preferences, presumably in large part due to geographic variations in the predominant features of the disease. Consequently, it is in that field that conspicuous changes are liable to occur as the venue of the congress passes from one region to another—and it is in this matter that instability is most conspicuous to the world at large.¹

Heretofore, the technical committees were named when the congresses convened, and they attempted to produce well-considered reports within the few days of the meetings—a task which the late John Lowe once characterized as impossible. For the coming Congress, in the hope of obtaining well-considered opinion beforehand, the technical panels established by the International Leprosy Association have been asked to study the Madrid reports and prepare recommendations for changes when any seem needed. The members of the Association's panels who will be able to get to New Delhi will automatically become members of the Congress' technical committees, their numbers to be added to (within the limit set) by other members of the Congress as usual.

¹ Here lies one of the strongest arguments for those who hold that votation in the plenary sessions of the congress should be on a one-vote-per-nation basis.

It is hoped thus if possible to improve the work of these committees, and certainly to facilitate it. Regarding the latter point, the recent custom (since Cairo) of meeting during the hours that the scientific sessions are in progress will be strongly discouraged, if possible prohibited, because—and this has been one of the serious criticisms of the last two congresses—the sessions are much weakened by the absence of the experts who are named to the committees.

—H.W.W.