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## THE ABORTIVE CASE; THE TERM "LEPER"

To the EDITOR:

Recent observations made in Ceylon and India have, to my mind, emphasized the importance of abortive cases of leprosy. It seems to me possible that, at least in those countries, many cases are being treated that do not need treatment, and that workers in leprosy are getting entirely erroneous ideas about the situation. It doesn't convey very much to say that there are 6,000 or 60,000 cases of leprosy in a given district. What it is important to know is how many of these cases are active, how many of them occur in childhood or early adolescence, and how many of them are open. This is the information which is really important but which one seldom gets.

When one only gets information with regard to numbers two results may take place: (1) the public gets scared; and (2) the

government gets to think that the problem is so large that it is useless to attempt to deal with it, and therefore does nothing. Attention should be called emphatically to this matter, and I intend to prepare an article on it in the near future.

May I mention the fact that the Manila Conference adopted a certain resolution suggesting that the word "leper" should not be used? Since the conference I have made efforts never to use the word "leper" in *Leprosy Review*, except in articles which are reprinted, but I notice that the INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL uses that word pretty well throughout. Now, most of us have got to take our cue from the JOURNAL, and if it does not intend to keep that word out of medical articles then I see no use in my continuing the solitary fight.

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*Comment.*—The last paragraph of this letter was referred to two of the officers of the International Leprosy Association who have to do with the policies of the JOURNAL. One of them, himself an editor of another medical periodical, wrote:

With regard to Dr. Cochrane's protest, he has my sympathy. I acknowledge that all the arguments are against the use of the word, but so they are against the use of a good many words which we employ in English. Constant use gives them currency and, as the word currency implies, they could hardly be withdrawn from circulation right away. I plead guilty of the use of "leper" myself, though I do not employ it as frequently as I used to. I think it is a matter of education, and one that will take time. I suggest that the effort be made to convert the Mission to "Lepers." Personally I feel that we should try not to use the word and that gradually we shall get out of it, but I am not a believer in prohibition.

The other adviser wrote:

I sincerely hope that both Dr. Cochrane and you can eliminate "leper" from your respective publications. I find it extremely hard, in my own writing, to omit the word, but I am struggling hard and hope after awhile to be able to reach a hundred per cent proficiency.

Dr. Cochrane replies:

So long as the effort is maintained to drop the word out of the English language I have no more to say. I still maintain, however, that the word does

not need to be used, although very frequently one has to do a certain amount of circumlocution.

The matter is commented on editorially on another page. The article on the abortive case referred to by Dr. Cochrane will, it is hoped, be available for the next issue number of the JOURNAL.