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EDITORIALS

Editorials are written by members of the Editorial Board, and opinions expressed are those of the writers. Any statement that does not meet with agreement will be of service if it but stimulates discussion, for which provision is made elsewhere.

FIRST CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LEPROSY ASSOCIATION

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL LEPROSY CONFERENCE

The International Leprosy Association proposes to hold a general gathering of leprosy workers and others interested in the subject in Cairo, under the patronage of the Government of Egypt, beginning March 21st, 1938. This will be the first meeting of the Association since its organization, and the fourth international leprosy conference ever to be held.

The first gathering of this nature was held in Berlin in 1897, the second in Bergen in 1909, and the third in Strassburg in 1923. Since the last of these meetings, national leprosy conferences have been held in several countries, including Brazil, India, South Africa and China. There have also been two conferences that, though in a sense international, were of quite another order. The first was that of a Leprosy Commission appointed by the Health Organization of the League of Nations, which met at Bangkok in December, 1930, during a session of the Far Eastern Association of Tropical Medicine. It confined its deliberations largely to the important problem of the prophylaxis of leprosy. The other was a round-table conference held in the Philippines in January, 1931, under the auspices of the Leonard Wood Me-

morial for the Eradication of Leprosy (now the American Leprosy Foundation). The membership of that conference was limited to a few representative leprologists and health authorities from certain countries where leprosy is common, largely of the Far East.

For guidance in planning the meeting to be held in Cairo, it seems desirable that we should consider briefly the previous conferences and their lines of procedure, the subjects discussed, and the resolutions adopted.

The Berlin Conference in 1897 lasted from October 11 to 16, and comprised six daily sessions. Such world-famous leprologists, pathologists and dermatologists as Hansen, Virchow, Ehlers, Neisser, Unna, Arning, Sticker, Lassar, Babès, Klingmüller, Jeanselme, Abraham and Hutchinson contributed papers and took part in the discussions. There were 152 contributors, and 121 members were present.

The main subjects discussed centered around the Hansen bacillus as the cause of leprosy, and the transmission of the disease by contagion. With the exception of Sir Jonathan Hutchinson, who adhered to his food hypothesis and condemned all measures for the compulsory segregation of lepers as useless and cruel, the members were unanimous regarding the contagiousness of leprosy. Their conclusions were expressed in the following resolutions:

1. In such countries, where leprosy forms foci or has a great extension, we have in isolation the best means of preventing the spread of the disease.
2. The system of obligatory notification, of observation and isolation as carried out in Norway, is recommended to all nations with local self-government and a sufficient number of physicians.
3. It should be left to the legal authorities after consultation with the medical authorities to take such measures as are applicable to the special social conditions of the districts.

It was also proposed that the conference should appoint a commission, composed of twenty members with power to increase its membership, which should (a) prepare a plan for an international leprosy society, (b) consider the publication of an "archive of leprosy" for scientific and statistical reports, etc., and (c) also consider the feasibility of publishing a book on leprosy, to be prepared by various contributors, as suggested by Dr. Neisser. This conference resulted in the publication of *Leprosy*, a journal which continued to appear between 1900 and 1915, when publication was discontinued because of the war.

The Second International Leprosy Conference was held in Bergen, Norway, August 15 to 19, 1909. There were 146 contributors, and 125 members were present. In addition to the opening reception on

Sunday, the 15th, there were six sessions, besides demonstrations and entertainments that were given in the evenings. The subjects of the papers and discussions included transmission and bacteriology, diagnosis and clinical signs, treatment, pathology, serology and prophylaxis. The following resolutions were passed:

1. The Second International Scientific Conference on Leprosy confirms in every respect the resolutions adopted by the First International Conference of Berlin, 1897. Leprosy is a disease which is contagious from person to person, whatever may be the method by which the contagion is affected. Every country, in whatever latitude it is situated, is within the range of possible infection by leprosy, and may, therefore, usefully, undertake measures to protect itself.

2. In view of the success obtained in Germany, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, it is desirable that other countries with leprosy should proceed to isolate their lepers.

3. It is desirable that lepers should not be permitted to follow certain occupations which are particularly dangerous in respect to the contagion of leprosy. In every country and in all cases the strict isolation of leprosy beggars and vagrants is necessary.

4. It is desirable that the healthy children of lepers should be separated from their leprous parents as soon as possible, and that these children should remain under observation.

5. An examination by a competent physician should be made from time to time of those who have lived with lepers.

6. All theories on the etiology and the mode of propagation of leprosy should be carefully examined to ascertain if they accord with our knowledge of the nature and the biology of the bacillus of leprosy. It is desirable that the question of the transmissibility of leprosy by insects should be elucidated, and that the possibility of the existence of leprosy diseases among animals (rats etc.) should receive early study.

7. The clinical study of leprosy induces the belief that it is not incurable. We do not at present possess a certain remedy. It is desirable, therefore, to continue the search for a specific remedy.

The Third International Leprosy Conference was held at Strassburg from July 28 to 31, 1923, with 146 contributors but apparently only 62 members present. The president was Professor Jeanselme, and the general secretary was Professor Marchoux. At the six sessions the papers read and discussed dealt with leprosy statistics, etiology, pathology, treatment, prophylaxis and legislation. The following resolutions were passed:

The Third International Scientific Conference on Leprosy maintains the principles of organization of the campaign against leprosy admitted by the previous Conference, and adopts the following resolutions:

1. Legislation against leprosy must necessarily differ in various countries, but in every case it is necessary to prevent the entrance of leprous foreigners.

2. In every country where leprosy is common the form of isolation practised in Norway, in hospital or at home, is recommended to be carried out as far as possible.

3. In endemic foci of leprosy isolation is necessary. (a) This isolation should be humane and permit the leper to remain in the proximity of his family, if that measure is compatible with efficacious treatment. (b) In the case of indigent and homeless people, and in general those who cannot be isolated at home, isolation should be carried out, and the most efficacious treatment given in a hospital, sanatorium or agricultural colony, according to the case or the country concerned. (c) It is recommended that children should be separated at birth from leprosy parents and kept under observation.

4. The members of a leper's family should be submitted to periodical examination.

5. It should be made widely known that leprosy is a contagious disease.

6. Lepers should be prevented from acting in any way which would expose others to infection; but this prevention should be carried out in such a way as to be of assistance to the patient and his dependents.

The Conference also recommended:

(1) That clinical, histological and bacteriological research be pursued for the elucidation of tuberculoid leprosy. (2) That the comparative study of human and rat leprosy be continued. (3) That research for a specific remedy for leprosy be actively pursued. (4) That the League of Nations renew the publication of "Lepra" (International Archives of Leprosy.) (5) That the League of Nations constitute an international bureau of information and inquiry regarding leprosy. (6) That the League of Nations undertake to collect statistics regarding leprosy throughout the world.¹

At the Leonard Wood Memorial Conference, held from January 9 to 23, 1931, there were only 22 members and, as it was intended to be an informal round-table conference, no prepared papers were read. After the conference was organized and an agenda agreed upon, the various topics were discussed, for the most part in special committees. The reports of these committees were presented to the plenary sessions, in which final decisions were reached. During the period mentioned several days were devoted to a journey of inspection of regional leprosy treatment stations at Cebu, Zamboanga and Iloilo, and of the Culion Leper Colony. The sessions were continued with only brief intermissions throughout the tour, both on the steamer and at ports visited. The discussions were frank and detailed, and were in most instances extended to a point of reconciliation of viewpoints and common agreement. It was thus possible to cover ground and come to conclusions to an extent which would have been impossible had the meetings been held on the lines of the Berlin, Bergen and Strassburg

¹At the end of the conference the Health Committee of the League of Nations gave a pronouncement regarding the last three of these recommendations. It would not take up the publication of "Lepra" but would publish important memoirs sent to it. It would publish, in its monthly epidemiological reports, statistical and other inquiries on leprosy which it received.

conferences, valuable as were the latter for the purposes for which they were convened.

The question therefore arises: On what lines should the meeting to be held at Cairo be organized? Should formal papers be read, and if so what proportion of the time should be occupied by reading of papers? Should discussion be in full session or in committee? In other words, should the lines of the first three international conferences be followed, or those of the Leonard Wood Memorial Conference, or should a combination of the two be attempted?

There can be no doubt that, while the findings of the last-mentioned conference were in many respects only tentative, they have given leprologists a basis of discussion for want of which there had previously been much confusion. Many of the findings of that conference have been severely criticized, but they have also stimulated research which has shed fresh light on various problems. Another outcome of this conference, the publication of *THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LEPROSY*, under the auspices of the International Leprosy Association (of which the preliminary organization was effected at the conference), with the financial aid of the Leonard Wood Memorial, has also been invaluable in directing and combining the efforts of workers throughout the world.

It is now felt by the General Council of the Association that the time is approaching when the outcome of the work and criticism alluded to can usefully be crystallized by a meeting of those who during the last few years have been endeavoring to understand and cope with leprosy problems in widely separated fields, and of others who are sufficiently interested in this field of endeavor to join with them. Whatever lines the conference may take, there are two essentials which should be aimed at. The whole range of the leprosy problem should be open for discussion, but special attention should be directed to those important phases of it which at present cause most confusion. Furthermore, while the presentation of prepared papers should doubtless be provided for, abundant time should also be allowed for full discussion in small, yet fully representative committees.

The General Council of the Association earnestly invites all present members, and all other persons who are interested in the proposed meeting, whether they themselves can attend it or not, to send to the General Secretary-Treasurer, in London, suggestions as to the manner in which it should be conducted and the topics that should be discussed.

E. MUIR.