

THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU: (*Continued*)

10th Conference.—The Government of Colombia appointed the Organizing Committee and at the same time set July 24 to August 7, 1938 as the date for the 10th Pan American Sanitary Conference to be held at Bogotá, Colombia. Later on, at the suggestion of the Organizing Committee and in agreement with the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, the Government of Colombia changed the opening date of the Conference to September 4th, 1938, the sessions to extend to the 18th of that month. However, the Conference itself decided to shorten the duration of the Conference by four days, and the final session was held September 14th.

It was therefore a little less than four years after the 9th Conference was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 12th to 22nd, 1934, that the 10th Pan American Sanitary Conference opened in the city of Bogotá, Colombia. Dr. Jorge Bejarano was elected President and Drs. Jorge Salcedo Salgar and Aristides A. Moll, Secretaries General. Other Secretaries elected were Drs. Raul Godinho, Rulx Léon, Edward C. Ernst and Pedro Machado.

Twenty of the 21 Republics were represented at this Conference, the Delegates from Paraguay at the last minute not being able to attend. There were 69 Delegates present, the largest representation at these Conferences up to that time. Colombia was represented by 17 delegates, the United States by 7 and Venezuela sent 6. Chile and Perú sent 4 each, Brasil 3 and the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Honduras, Mexico, Bolivia and Ecuador 2 each. Uruguay, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Cuba, Panama, Costa Rica, Haiti and El Salvador, each were represented by one Delegate. Six Delegates went from the Pan American Sanitary Bureau and one each went from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Health Organization of the League of Nations and the International Labor Office. Dr. Hugh S. Cumming represented both the International Office of Public Health of Paris and the Pan American Sanitary Bureau. There were also seven special guests from these various organizations.

During the first plenary session a special tribute of one minute of silence was paid to Dr. Pablo García Medina, the founder of the public health service of Colombia, and Drs. Federico Lleras Acosta and David McCormick, who had distinguished themselves in work on leprosy and yellow fever respectively.

In his opening address, Dr. Alberto Jaramillo Sánchez, of Columbia, made the following remarks:

Due to their efficiency and the prestige which they have enjoyed, the meetings of the American hygienists have become a tradition as well as valuable assets to the Governments of the Nations which have lent them their support. Of the

series, the 10th Pan American Sanitary Conference at Bogotá will mark a forward step in the victorious struggle which the men of science have been waging against sickness and calamity which destroy resources, produce suffering and cause distress.

The series of addresses at the opening session was closed by Dr. Jorge Bejarano, who spoke, in part, as follows:

America was the creator of International Defense in order to protect the health of its own population. The human element therein has, during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first ones of the twentieth, been dedicated to the noble task of endowing Americanism with the conception of its own worth. Therefore, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau has watched over the health of the Continent and continuing its good work brought about this series of meetings which, with the one we are now attending, brings up to ten the number of sanitary conferences held thus far. The Bureau at Washington not only calls a meeting every four years of the men of science in America, but in 1922 it also launched the Pan American Sanitary Bulletin, a marvelous compilation of scientific studies and admirable report on the health conditions of the countries of this Continent, and furthermore, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau obtained at Habana, in 1924, the adherence of all those countries to the Pan American Sanitary Code, the real statute of health of the American Republics.

The program as suggested by the III Pan American Conference of National Directors of Health included 16 subjects: campaign against venereal diseases; nutrition; social security in its medical-sanitary aspects; maritime and aerial quarantine measures; pre-natal and child welfare; public health in regard to centralizing services and training of health personnel; water supplies, housing and rural hygiene; yellow fever; plague; leprosy; tuberculosis; typhus fever; virus diseases; regional diseases including malaria; vaccines and preventive sera; and disease carriers.

General reports on the health conditions in their respective countries were submitted by the Delegates from the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Perú. Besides the comprehensive report presented by Dr. Soper of the Rockefeller Foundation, the Delegates from Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Paraguay, Perú and Venezuela reported on activities in regard to yellow fever in their respective countries.

Resolutions adopted dealt with: coordination of all public health activities under a common technical administration; establishment of the sanitary career on a merit system basis, following the creation of schools of hygiene for special training of physicians and auxiliary personnel; appointment of a special committee to study bills of health; development of public health nursing staffs; inclusion of bureaus of vital statistics in public health departments; adoption of the Spanish edition of the Pharmacopoeia of the United States by those countries having no Pharmacopoeias of their own; establishment of research and training institutes; holding of exhibits at Pan American Sanitary Conferences; recognition of the benefits derived from social security; participation of health authorities in activities of community restaurants; preparation of

standards for water supplies; recommending special courses in sanitary engineering; commending the progress in building of sanitary homes; suggesting the Bacteriological Institute of Buenos Aires as depository for biological standards; commending the creation of laws on maternal welfare; recommending the compulsory reporting of pregnancy as well as of births; provision of adequate training for midwives and supervision of their activities; narcotic control; granting the Nobel Prize to scientists of the Rockefeller Foundation for their work on yellow fever; making vaccination facilities available for persons residing in yellow fever infected areas; giving more consideration to amebiasis; research work on leprosy; and malaria; campaigns against plague; commending the progress made in the control and prevention of typhus fever, American trypanosomiasis, tuberculosis and venereal diseases; Government supervision of the quality of laboratory services in regard to venereal diseases.

A very important action consisted in the approval of amendments to the Constitution and Statutes of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau which increased annual quotas for the Bureau, provided for election of the Directing Council, and placed on a definite schedule the Pan American Sanitary Conferences and the Pan American Conferences of National Directors of Health, and gave definite rules for their organization.

At the closing session, Dr. López de Mesa, Minister of Foreign Relations of Colombia, said, among other things, the following:

It behooves us to find out what is lacking on this Continent, and in what way we can fulfill these commitments, because the very fact of being implies sacred duties. This Continent has not arisen on Earth in vain, for all human beings who occupy space and time, just as all nations that occupy space and time, have to justify this free gift of existence. Naturally we of the Americas have to fulfill these demands by the creation of a culture of our own, and this particular culture I have always understood to be a synthesis of the course of history and of the ethnical course of humanity.

As a meeting place for the next Conference, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, was chosen.

The printed proceedings made 766 pages. The book was so large that in order to include as much material as possible, the Government of Colombia contributed substantially to the cost of its publication.

11th Conference.—In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and Statutes of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, as modified by the 10th Pan American Sanitary Conference, the Government of Brazil informed, in due time, that the Organizing Committee of the 11th Conference had been appointed having as its Chairman, Dr. João de Barros Barreto, Director of the National Department of Health of Brazil, and added that invitations were being issued to the various Governments for the XI Conference, which was to be held in Rio de

Janeiro. July 5-16 was tentatively set for the date of the meeting. However, after further correspondence it was agreed, at the suggestion of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, to postpone for a few months the Conference, September 7-18 being finally adopted as the most convenient date.

It was therefore exactly four years and two days after the 10th Pan American Sanitary Conference opened in the city of Bogotá, Colombia, September 4, 1938, that the 11th Conference met in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on September 6, 1942, in spite of the abnormal conditions brought about by the War. The sessions continued for two weeks to and including September 18. Dr. João de Barros Barreto was elected President and Drs. Aristides A. Moll and Almir Castro, Secretaries General. Other Secretaries elected were Drs. Jules Thébaud, Edward C. Ernst, Guillermo García de Paredes and Osvaldo Lopes da Costa.

All 21 Republics were represented at this Conference as well as was Canada, which for the first time sent a delegation at the special invitation of the Brazilian Government. The record number of Delegates was 84, 20 of them being from Brazil. Paraguay sent 8, the United States and Chile were represented by 7 each, Haiti and Peru 4 each, and Argentina and Ecuador 3 each, while Canada, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela were represented by two Delegates each, and 1 each was sent from Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The Pan American Sanitary Bureau sent 5 representatives and the Rockefeller Foundation and the International Labor Office sent 1 each.

It was again agreed to limit the speeches in the opening session to the official welcome by a Government official and speeches by the President of the Conference and the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau.

In his opening address, Dr. João de Barros Barreto made in part the following statements:

Through the patient efforts of Cumming and his co-workers in Washington, a continental sanitary consciousness is being created in America, and unity of thought, so necessary in regard to public health problems, is gradually being consolidated. Under his able command, the Bureau became an active center of interchange, of coordination of activities, of close cooperation with health organizations of the various countries. It is a constructive work, governed by patience, in which policies must agree with technical objectives; constantly expanding, it is a strenuous job, conceived by Cumming, a man of action and ideals and who will no doubt make it become even more important, more powerful and effective. These fine and effective results of Pan Americanism, which Cumming inspires and directs, have had more brilliant consequences than the mere exhibition of

scientific values, than an interchange of ideas, or the report of deeds and sanitary achievements: they have given rise to a strengthened union of the American family, closely united by bonds of affection, inspired by the common ideals of progress, harmony and understanding.

This was the first time a Pan American Sanitary Conference had met in war times and the problems then confronting all the American Republics were very much in the minds of the Delegates.

In his address to the Delegates, Dr. Hugh S. Cumming answered a query raised by many delegates:

There may have been in the minds of some, doubts as to the advisability of holding a Pan American Sanitary Conference at this particular moment. Had the problems to be discussed been merely routine ones, I would be inclined to agree with them. However, this is far from being the case. The first—and practically the main—subject on our program is “Continental Defense and Public Health.” Entirely new problems in continental health have arisen as the result of world developments. This is a subject on which we must have a clear understanding and a constant exchange of impressions. More than ever we must foresee what difficulties may handicap our defense efforts, and what help is available or may be extended by our sister countries. These considerations more than justify the hardships to which many of the delegates have been put in coming. We will all derive fresh inspiration and new strength and conviction from this new evidence of our solidarity in health matters.

As agreed at the previous Conference the program included only eight subjects as follows: chest survey; tuberculosis and pneumoconiosis; influenza or grippe; undulant fever; typhus in America; Chagas’ disease, pinto and other American parasitoses; diarrheas (including salmonellosis); degenerative diseases (including cardiovascular diseases and cancer). In addition the Committees of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau on nutrition, malaria and model sanitary code submitted very complete reports on their work.

Due, however, to the entirely new problems in continental health which have arisen as a result of world developments, Continental Defense and Public Health was given special attention in the deliberations of the Conference, in accordance with the recommendations made at the informal meeting of National health authorities of the American Republics at Atlantic City and Washington, D. C., in October 1941.

A series of outstanding contributions were presented from various countries on these different matters. The limitation of subjects also permitted devoting more attention to those questions in which there was special interest. Two Conference Committees, namely, those on Continental Defense and Sanitary Engineering prepared special reports which served as bases for resolutions, as was also the case with reports of the Malaria and Nutrition Committees.

The resolutions and recommendations adopted at the Conference,

a number of which reflected the conditions brought about by the War, dealt with: precautionary measures to be taken by the American Republics to insure public health; extraordinary preventive methods against the spreading of epidemics; protection of water supplies; adequate allocation of foodstuffs; importance of safe milk; accurate vital statistics; acceptance by the Republics of the recommendations of the Malaria Committee of the Bureau; recognition of work done toward the eradication of yellow fever, bubonic plague and typhus fever; continuation of studies regarding Chagas' disease; study of immunization processes against influenza; adoption of microfilm method of diagnosis in tuberculosis campaign; organization of the Second Pan American Leprosy Conference by the Pan American Sanitary Bureau; special measures and studies in regard to diarrheas and enteritides; inclusion of the subject of housing on the program of the 5th Pan American Conference of National Directors of Health, and that the subject of diarrheas and enteritides be again considered at the 12th Conference in the light of new studies to be undertaken by the various countries.

The satisfaction of the Conference with the work accomplished by permanent Committees previously appointed by the Pan American Sanitary Bureau was shown through its action in recommending the creation of similar new Committees on Sanitary Engineering, Typhus and Continental Defense.

Among other things, Dr. Oswaldo Aranha, Foreign Minister of Brazil, said the following in the closing session:

In this series of noble and brilliant debates, representing a period of fruitful labor in behalf of medicine and for the good of America, we find a scientific demonstration of harmony and fraternity, animated and maintained not only by the spiritual bonds of human wisdom, but also by those of continental cooperation and solidarity. I am convinced that an atmosphere of understanding and intimate moral affinity has united you in these days as you studied ways to perfect American public health work, and I am also certain that all of you were moved by the idea of coming to the relief of humanity which is unfortunately so afflicted with moral sufferings that all efforts at relieving physical pains and troubles seem feeble indeed. America, my friends, has faith in noble deeds and in science which benefit man. Thanks to you, pioneers in the work of bettering the sanitary conditions in our countries, we can look to the America of the future with hope and knowing that the lives of our children will be more secure, healthier, finer and happier.

The Government of Brazil volunteered to assume charge of the publication of the Transactions of the Conference. This generous offer was accepted by the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, this being the first time when this course was adopted.

(To be continued)