

THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU (*Continued*)

General José Siurob, of Mexico, said during his address at the opening meeting of the Conference:

I believe that this is the time to express the appreciation of this Assembly, by acknowledging the accomplishments of the Government and people of this great country, for the timely aid rendered on different occasions to the cause of public health in our countries, and we wish to stress these deeds as legitimate reasons for pride as well as for the sincere gratitude of our peoples towards their brothers in the United States, because they represent a real manifestation of Pan-Americanism which only the blind could fail to see. Because of these deeds you have a very special place in our hearts. We shall never forget Morton, Welch, Walter Reed, Gorgas, Theobald Smith and Carroll, and it pleases me to tell you that various laboratories and hospitals in our countries bear some of these names, because, like yourselves, we wish to make them immortal as well as bear witness to the fact that your great nation can add to its material greatness the most noble virtues, the most brilliant talents, all for the cause of humanity. In order to attain the same objectives, fortunately, we can count upon energetic and wise men in our own countries, who are worthy emulators of you and who are disposed to dedicate all of their energies along with you towards obtaining victory in this great battle which constitutes the work of sanitation. These men are the followers of Finlay, Agramonte, Licéaga, Robles, Oswaldo Cruz, Da Rocha Lima, Chagas, Unanue, Lemos Monteiro and García Medina, the illustrious masters, who left to us good seed, the fruits of their will and self-abnegation.

The following subjects were included on the program of the Conference: coordination of the policies and work of the federal, state and municipal departments of health; health appropriations and distribution of funds; notification of communicable diseases; health problems connected with life in high altitudes; rural health; child welfare; pharmacopeia; prevention of the spread of yellow fever; tuberculosis campaign; venereal disease campaign; industrial hygiene; narcotics; nutrition; use of vaccination in prevention of smallpox, scarlet fever, measles, typhoid, diphtheria, whooping cough, typhus, bacillary dysenteries, rabies and cholera; use of serums in the treatment of scarlet fever, measles, diphtheria, bacillary dysenteries and cholera; plague; poliomyelitis; trachoma; onchocerciasis; pinto; leprosy; and malaria. Other subjects had been placed on the program but at the last minute they had to be left off through lack of time.

The Conference placed itself on record as approving the modern tendencies noted throughout the various American Republics in regard to centralizing and developing sanitary work. The increase in the number of health centers in urban as well as rural districts was commended and it was urged that all such work be done by full-time trained personnel. All of the Directors of Health who presented reports on health work in their respective countries were congratulated and it was recommended that the various American governments prepare similar reports for presentation at the X Pan American Sanitary Conference.

Other resolutions adopted dealt with: industrial hygiene; prenatal hygiene; health education of women; life in high altitudes; food and nutrition; narcotics; amebiasis; leprosy; poliomyelitis; trachoma; venereal diseases; malaria; tricentennial of discovery of cinchona; disease carriers; continued study of vaccines; and vital statistics. A series of subjects for the program for the X Pan American Sanitary Conference were suggested.

The Rockefeller Foundation and the Pan American Sanitary Bureau were congratulated on their work in fostering and aiding the sanitary programs throughout the American Republics. The latter group was especially lauded for the publication of its monthly Bulletin, which is distributed among all the Pan American nations. The closing meeting of the actual Conference was held April 11, 1936, the delegates remaining to attend other public health meetings in progress in Washington at the time.

The Proceedings of the Conference were issued as Publication No. 121 of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, and made a volume of 396 pages.

Fourth Conference.—At the invitation of Dr. Hugh S. Cumming, Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, issued October 26, 1939, the IV Pan American Conference of National Directors of Health met in Washington from May 1 to 8, 1940; a preliminary session was held on April 30. A period of four years had elapsed since the opening of the III Conference, which occurred on April 4th, 1936. Dr. Hugh S. Cumming was elected President by acclamation, and the following other officers were designated: Vice-Presidents, Dr. Juan Jacobo Spangenberg, Dr. Alberto Hurtado, Dr. Rafael Schiaffino and Dr. L. García Maldonado; Secretary-General, Dr. Aristides A. Moll.

The Delegates from 20 of the American Republics numbered 51, 16 of them being from the United States. Cuba was represented by four, Argentina, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Venezuela by three each, Costa Rica and Uruguay by two each, and Bolivia, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru by one each. The Pan American Sanitary Bureau was represented by four delegates. The guests of honor included Dr. R. E. Wodehouse of Canada; Dr. A. E. Wolff from Dutch Guiana (Surinam); Dr. R. Pierret of the International Office of Public Health of Paris; and Drs. John A. Ferrell, George K. Strode and Mark W. Boyd from the Rockefeller Foundation. Other prominent physicians and scientists were also present, having come to attend the VIII American Scientific Congress which was held immediately afterwards.

The sessions held from May 1 to 8 offered an excellent occasion for the interchange of impressions regarding the numerous and important problems confronting the health authorities of the various Republics. The Delegations were larger than ever and all the sessions were charac-

terized by the importance and number of the reports presented, and by the constant spirit of cooperation and Pan Americanism which invariably reigned over the deliberations.

An innovation was the presentation, for the first time at one of these Conferences, of a Health Exhibition, to which Argentina, Chile, various organizations in the United States, Mexico, and Venezuela sent valuable material, in addition to the display arranged by the Pan American Sanitary Bureau.

At the inaugural session of the IV Conference, the Honorable Adolf A. Berle, Assistant Secretary of State of the United States, spoke as follows:

There are many agencies of inter-American cooperation, but none stands higher in the affections of the United States than the Pan American Sanitary Bureau. The defense of public health must be a major concern of the American family of nations, whatever the international situation. It seems to me that defense against disease is probably the most appropriate theme for an international conference. Disease, when you stop to think, is perhaps the most international subject in the world. It knows no frontiers. It has no particular prejudices against anyone based on race, or creed, or color, or nationality, but attacks them all with an impersonal enmity. It travels without passports, and is subject to little, if any, visa control. Its attack operates on land, at sea, and in the air; and it finds fifth columns to act as host and transmitting agents in all quarters, high and low. Its warfare can be total; and occasionally it can develop its attack with lightning speed. Against that continuous struggle there are aligned the organized forces of civilized common sense, here represented by yourselves.

Dr. Thomas Parran, Director General of the United States Public Health Service, addressed the assembly as follows:

Experience over many years has demonstrated the great value of Pan American collaboration in public health. Valuable in the past, it is urgent today. When we last met, the world was at peace. Today, all or a part of every continent of the earth is at war. Perhaps two-thirds of the world's population is engaged in the business of death and destruction. How puny seem our own efforts for human conservation in the face of mass killing, wide-spread starvation and profligate destruction of the material resources of the world!

Dr. Jorge Bejarano, of Colombia, made the following statements:

The history of the Panama Canal belongs to our own time. The most far-reaching dream of conquest of the Latin genius failed because the necessary health measures were forgotten. It was not the financial scandal which destroyed that great enterprise destined to exert an influence still unsuspected on the future of our civilization. Over that cemetery of ideals and of men, from which man and his creative spirit have fled, the gates of the sea were opened twenty years later to give free passage to culture and civilization. American genius had conquered malaria and yellow fever, and praise is due to the valiant pioneers of American science and sanitation, Finlay, Gorgas, Carter and a thousand others whose names illuminate like searchlights the destiny of our humanity and civilization. This miracle was possible thanks to science, to our science, one and distinct: the science

of Public Health. To serve that science we are meeting here today in brotherly comradeship. The American world looks forward to better days and centuries of greatness as the result of our deliberations.

General José Siurob, of Mexico expressed himself as follows:

All of us, great and small, are dedicated to the colossal labor of giving to our countries citizens whose strong and healthy bodies will testify to and carry on the constructive spirit of the men of science who have gone before us. This spirit, animated by a firm will and tireless energy, will be able to face any struggle, to wrest from nature all her resources and all her secrets and make of our countries, not powerful instruments of brute force, ruined by the terrible toll of war, not veritable prisons wherein life passes in anguish and the human conscience is enslaved, but rather, homes of free beings, centers of the mutual understanding and justice whereby life achieves its highest moral and spiritual aims. Let us work as apostles of this doctrine with firm decision and with the severe discipline which we have imposed upon ourselves, at the same time educating our governing bodies and our peoples, since to us is entrusted the labor of bringing the activities of governors and governed into harmony with all the sciences relating to medicine and hygiene. In this work we must display the same self-abnegation, patience and constancy which we have so often seen in both the humble visiting nurse and the scientific research worker, who recognize no fixed hours of leisure.

In the closing speech of the Inaugural Session of the IV Pan American Conference of Directors of Health, Dr. Hugh S. Cumming, spoke thus:

How general was the feeling that the American Republics should have a center of coordination in health matters may be seen from the fact that the Pan American Sanitary Bureau had its inception in a Conference in Mexico; and that of the four signers of the draft suggesting this step, one represented Uruguay, one Chile, one Mexico, and one the United States. Without this constant and increasing cooperation and support in the past of all the American Republics, little good could have been accomplished. I myself, in the 20 years that I have headed this organization of ours, have regularly depended on the counsel and assistance of my colleagues from all countries on our continent as otherwise I would not have felt free to undertake certain steps or promote measures of undoubted usefulness, but for which no clear precedent existed. Prevention through cooperation has been throughout the last four decades the watchword of our Bureau, to a greater extent since 1920 than before, and to a much greater extent now than in 1920.

The program of the meeting included discussion of the following topics: reports on health progress made in each Republic since the X Pan American Sanitary Conference; syphilis; aerial navigation; malaria; nutrition; sanitary engineering; public health personnel; vital statistics organization from the standpoint of health; preparation of a sanitary code of general application in the American Republics; preparation of health data from the point of view of the Americas; life in urban and rural districts; typhoid fever; industrial hygiene; poliomyelitis; mental hygiene; future work of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau; Chagas' disease; and undulant fever. As last year, a few of the subjects planned for discussion had to be omitted through lack of time.

(To be continued)