

## THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU (*Continued*)

Among the International Conferences of American States the Fifth Conference, held at Santiago, Chile in 1923, occupies an especially important place insofar as public health is concerned. At this meeting there were adopted a number of significant resolutions which have to a considerable extent influenced public health progress in the Americas, as well as cemented relations previously established in that field. Among them was the following:

The fifth International Conference of American States, RESOLVES: To recommend to the Governments of America that in the intervals between Pan American Sanitary Conferences, and not less frequently than once in five years, the Directing Heads of Public Health Services or accredited representatives who shall be responsible officials of the Health Services, be sent to Washington, for conference upon such date as may be mutually arranged through the Pan American Sanitary Bureau.

This move was apparently due to a belief that too long intervals separated the Pan American Sanitary Conferences and that it might be worth while to bring together the health executives of the American republics and the officials of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau more frequently and at a place where they might have an opportunity to inspect at first hand the latest sanitary developments. In accordance with the Santiago resolution, Pan American Conferences of Directors of Health have since been held in Washington in 1926, 1931, 1936 and 1940. As may be observed, these conferences were originally held every five years. However, the schedule was changed by a resolution of the X Pan American Sanitary Conference, providing that they should be held every four years, alternating with the Pan American Sanitary Conferences. Thus the health authorities of the American republics will meet every two years and exchange opinions on pressing health questions at regular and not overlong intervals. The Conferences of Directors of Health have shown an increasing importance both in attendance and in the character and scope of the reports presented and the resolutions adopted.

**First Conference.**—The First Pan American Conference of National Directors of Health was called by the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau on March 25, 1926 and was held in Washington from September 28th to 29th, 1926. There were 16 countries represented and 24 delegates present, four of them from the United States. Cuba was represented by three, Bolivia and Haiti by two, and Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela sent one each. The Pan American Sanitary Bureau was represented by one delegate. Dr. Hugh S. Cumming was elected Chairman, Dr. Alfonso Pruneda, Vice-

Chairman and Dr. Sebastián Lorente, Secretary-General of the Conference. Four Committees were appointed: Resolutions, Pan American Sanitary Code, Permanent Organizing Committee, and Public Health and Sanitation Administration.

At the opening session Dr. Lucas Sierra, of Chile, spoke in part, as follows:

One may well say that next to the glorious struggle for our liberty and independence, there is no other campaign of more vital importance than that of educating our people and inducing them to abandon all insanitary and medieval customs and practices as well as those traditionally unhealthy habits which can only be detrimental to the development of our culture and of the immense natural resources to be found in South America.

Dr. Pablo García Medina, of Colombia, made the following statements:

The physical and moral welfare of man, and not material wealth alone, represents the very basis of the existence of nations. For many years this view has inspired the sanitary policies which are improving conditions in the American nations, whose future depends upon the efforts which we all are making in order to bring about this ideal. Since 1902, the Sanitary Conferences have labored and have overcome great difficulties, and have met at the initiative of patriots of the United States and of the institutions which today are receiving us with demonstrations of sincere understanding which our Governments acknowledge and appreciate.

Dr. Ramón Báez Jr., of the Dominican Republic, expressed himself as follows:

It is with the greatest patriotic joy that I speak at this meeting, in order to congratulate warmly the Directors of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau for their fortunate initiative in holding this Conference. Besides the many advantages derived from this interchange of scientific ideas aiming at the welfare and happiness of the peoples of this Continent by means of sanitary improvement and progress, this Bureau has collaborated in a notable way in the defense of the health of the inhabitants of the New World, a worthy cause indeed.

Dr. José Azurdia, of Guatemala, said:

This harmonious and peaceful meeting is a great accomplishment, from which does not emerge, nor could possibly emerge, the slightest international friction, not the least fear nor a sign of rancor or suspicion among the peoples; rather, it will bring about complete well-being and prosperity for all, as we have come here, armed for battle in the name of health and sanitation, to wage war, it is true, but against sickness and death, all for the maintenance of health and the prolongation of life.

The following remarks were made by Dr. Bernardo J. Gastélum, of Mexico:

It is because of a feeling of friendship that the more fortunate peoples gather together to organize themselves, in order to serve those who have not as

yet reached a state of such complete development. We are commencing, therefore, to better serve the interests of humanity when we begin to forget the artificial barriers which divide the peoples just because some of them act differently from the others. This is particularly so when all the peoples aspire to find or to seek equal rights for their sister republics. It would be ideal to tend toward the foundation of a new culture that will be above the mere idea of nationality and which will be a challenge to certain savage traditions from which the Western civilization has not been able as yet to free itself.

Dr. Carlos J. Bello, of Venezuela, addressed the assembly as follows:

The Delegation of Venezuela wholeheartedly and with a feeling of deep emotion supports this Conference. Sufficient cause for such a feeling may be found in the very fact of attending a meeting with such great personalities, on whom depend the lives of individuals as well as the security of nations. It would also be sufficient to be a guest at this beautiful Capital of the United States, the cradle of George Washington as well as of Right and Liberty. Sufficient also is the remembrance of this surge of comradeship which brought about in America the recent centennial celebration of the Pan American Congress of 1826, at which our own Liberator Bolívar once again demonstrated his noble American character as well as the scope of his ideas and deeds.

No set program had been arranged in advance for the Conference, but the following subjects came up for discussion: Pan American Sanitary Code, and organization of public health administration in the different countries. The Pan American Sanitary Code preempted to a great extent the deliberations of the Conference. Because of certain objections and changes desired by some of the Republics, it had not been signed by all. Various suggestions for the revision of the Code were made in the resolutions which received attention at the VIII Pan American Sanitary Conference, it being agreed that this treaty could be signed with reservations by the countries wishing to do so.

In other resolutions the following subjects were stressed: campaign against drug addiction; international control of sale of drugs; Government care of drug addicts; placing of all health and social welfare work under Ministries or Departments of Health; contribution of a certain percentage of municipal revenues to the support of health services; intensified work on child welfare; improvement of water supplies; adequate regulations for plant quarantine; discovery and treatment of disease carriers; better control measures for bubonic plague, alastrim, intestinal parasites, venereal diseases, tuberculosis and leprosy; sex hygiene and education; industrial hygiene; vital statistics; fly eradication; trachoma prevention; control of immigration from standpoint of health; organization in each country of a permanent committee for the study and control of malaria; organization of Pan American medical geography from the point of view of epidemiology; sending of all official health reports to the Pan American Sanitary Bureau; recommendation to the various Governments of the establishment of ministries of health, social welfare and

labor; development of cinchona cultivation in the various Republics; making by the Pan American Sanitary Bureau of films covering health subjects for educational use; studies and classification of rodent fleas to be made in each country and the results forwarded to the Pan American Sanitary Bureau; Conference of Directors of Public Health to meet every five years, unless the Pan American Sanitary Bureau should believe that it should meet before; and appointment of a committee for study of the measures taken by the city of New York against plague, to serve as a basis for standardization of procedures in all the countries of the Pan American Union. Special homage was paid to the memory of the great sanitarians Drs. W. C. Gorgas, Carlos J. Finlay and Henry R. Carter.

Some suggestions were also given for the subjects to appear on the program of the VIII Pan American Sanitary Conference, to be held at Lima. This established a precedent which was to be continued and extended in the future. An interesting proposal was to the effect that efforts be made by the Pan American Sanitary Bureau to secure the adherence of European countries having colonies or territories in America to the provisions of the Pan American Sanitary Code.

At the closing session Dr. Alfonso Pruneda said:

Permit me to ask the Delegates to pay particular attention to a resolution adopted at the International Conference of the American States at Habana. I suggest that in Article LVI of the Sanitary Code, along with other functions of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, be included the distribution to the various American Governments of all kinds of publications, and reference lists of books and journals on health. You well know the importance of bibliographic data for reference and information. Sanitary problems develop daily and each country not only could but should send to the Pan American Sanitary Bureau all such publications. Aside from the Pan American Sanitary Bulletin, this recommendation has not been carried out and for a reason easily explained,—just because we do not send in our publications. Allow me to beg of you to take this request back to your governments in order that this portion of the recommendation be complied with and that copies of every health publication be sent for distribution to the Pan American Sanitary Bureau.

Dr. Hugh S. Cumming in the final address of the meeting made the following statements:

Most certainly the Bureau will attain such importance and prestige as you may desire. We find ourselves in the same fix as did the bricklayer. If you do not furnish the bricks and mortar, it is not possible for us to construct the building. I have seen the Paris Bureau function in such a lethargic manner that now and then it was necessary to prick it with a pin to see if it were still alive. For some time this Bureau was in the same condition, but I believe that it has now undergone a change. We now remember the old saying that *noblesse oblige*. We have the standing and with it the responsibility, the obligation of converting this Bureau into a useful organization for each and every one of us. I take, therefore, the liberty of begging you not only to help us but that you bring about the realization

of this ideal because it is our duty to send out statistical data and other information and also to ask you that you do likewise.

When finally compiled, the Proceedings of the Conference made a volume of 137 pages.

**Second Conference.**—At the invitation of Dr. Hugh S. Cumming, Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, sent on July 31, 1930, the Second Pan American Conference of National Directors of Health was held in Washington from April 20th to 28th, 1931, a little more than four and a half years after the First Conference, which met from September 27th to 29th, 1926. There were 13 countries represented with 23 Delegates present, six of them from the United States. Chile and Cuba were represented by two each and Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico and Venezuela by one each. Three delegates represented the Pan American Sanitary Bureau. There were 11 special guests at the Conference, including the Director General of the Pan American Union and representatives of the Rockefeller Foundation and the U. S. Public Health Service. Dr. Hugh S. Cumming was elected Chairman, Dr. Gregório Araújo Alfaro, Vice-Chairman, Dr. Waldemar E. Coutts, Secretary-General and Dr. Aristides A. Moll, Executive-Secretary. The following Committees were appointed: Credentials, Regulations, Resolutions, Aerial navigation, and Program for the IX Pan American Sanitary Conference.

At the opening meeting of the Conference, Dr. G. Araújo Alfaro, in his address, spoke as follows:

We possess the most beautiful, the most fertile and the richest land in the whole world. The science of disease prevention has reached a high degree of technical development. All we need, therefore, is to apply its principles and rules everywhere with wisdom and faith and without regard to cost, as it is always well repaid, in order that we may develop healthy and strong children and thus create in this New World a better, more vigorous and happier generation making progress in welfare work under the steady guidance of justice and peace.

Dr. João Pedro de Albuquerque, of Brazil, made the following remarks:

All our countries have sanitary problems peculiar to each; but a great number of health problems in general still defy solution even by the most able specialists. There are, for example, tuberculosis, venereal diseases, and above all cancer, that grave and difficult condition which becomes more important daily and which demands careful study. Cancer is becoming more serious year by year and has reached an alarming condition in some of our countries and therefore more profound research must be carried out. And what about all the other questions attending social hygiene? And how important is the problem of rural sanitation to us, the South Americans! I do not think it necessary to call attention to that question at this time because everywhere there is being preached the doctrine of

"back to the fields" as a solution of the difficulties under which people are laboring as inhabitants of large cities.

Dr. Waldemar E. Coutts said the following:

Science nowadays is not all that we need for bettering sanitary conditions in our countries. It is a well-known fact that a good and complete knowledge of the social welfare and sociological factors that underlie every one of these sanitary problems is the basis for the solution of these problems. We have observed in our country that laws used with good results in other American countries have failed absolutely in ours, because precisely the same problems have been studied only from an epidemiological point of view, or from an exclusively scientific point of view. A sociological study made in each country is the necessary basis on which we can combat communicable diseases.

In his address Dr. Miguel E. Bustamante, of Mexico, said in part:

For all of us, fundamental sanitary problems can be reduced essentially to the basis of education. Health education is a necessary factor in all Latin American countries, as much for those in the humble walks of life as for the privileged classes. The Delegate from Costa Rica spoke in a rather discouraged way of the terrible and tremendous incomprehension of those who strive for public health without the necessary official support. One may say that all of us have had this same experience and for that reason we in Mexico have directed the problem towards health education, endeavoring first to reach the municipal authorities, who represent the basis of our social organization, and from them taking it to the State authorities, and finally reaching the Federal authorities.

The program of the Conference included discussion of the following subjects: regulations to prevent the spread of communicable diseases by airplane; water supplies; disinfection; sanitary control of production and distribution of milk; inspection of herds and dairies, tuberculin tests; interpretation of Bill of Health according to the Pan American Sanitary Code; prevention of blindness including ophthalmia neonatorum, trachoma and ocular lesions in onchocerciasis; standardization of biological products; creation and operation of social hygiene organizations; control of plague, pellagra; yellow fever; typhus vaccination; tularemia; undulant fever; post-vaccination encephalitis; diphtheria; typhus; spotted fever; industrial hygiene; infant mortality; national control of narcotics; tuberculosis, especially from standpoint of vaccination; child welfare; rural hygiene; nutrition; control of prostitution and venereal disease and parasitosis. The Conference also suggested a program for the IX Pan American Sanitary Conference.

The resolutions approved by the Conference dealt with: air navigation; control of communicable diseases; standards for biological products; educational hygiene; yellow fever; leprosy; snake-bites; hookworm disease; onchocerciasis; trachoma; plague; malaria; tuberculosis; conjunctivitis neonatorum; smallpox vaccination; venereal diseases; eugenics; vital statistics; water supply; nutrition and food; milk; narcotics;

sanitary organization; sanitary budgets; hospitals; child and maternal welfare; social hygiene.

A special vote of thanks was extended to the President of the United States, the Hon. Herbert Hoover, for his cordial welcome to the Conference. In his letter to the Chairman of the Conference, the President said in part:

It is pleasant to recall that, during the last thirty years, through advances made in the science of medicine and through the cooperation of the health authorities of all the American Republics, as manifested in your Pan American Sanitary Conferences, in the activities of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau and in your conferences of Directors of Health, the ravages of the major quarantinable diseases, such as yellow fever, plague, cholera, smallpox and typhus fever, diseases which formerly often decimated whole cities, have nearly ceased. These pestilences are now almost entirely robbed of their power for harm. This being the case, you are able to turn your attention to the combating of other diseases and other unhealthful conditions which still interfere with the happiness and comfort of our people.

A vote of sympathy was extended to the Governments of Santo Domingo and Nicaragua because of the disastrous earthquakes suffered those countries.

When finally compiled, the Proceedings of the Conference made a volume of 241 pages, which was issued as Publication No. 60 of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau.

**Third Conference.**—On November 27, 1935, Dr. Hugh S. Cumming, Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, issued invitations to the various American Republics for the Third Pan American Conference of National Directors of Health. The Conference was held in Washington from April 4th to April 15th, 1936. This was a few days under five years since the Second Conference, which met on April 20th, 1931.

There were 30 delegates from 12 of the American Republics present at the meeting, 12 being from the United States. Mexico sent three, Costa Rica and Chile two each and Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela were represented by one delegate each. Dr. Hugh S. Cumming was elected President of the Conference; and Dr. Miguel Sussini, General José Siurob, Dr. Solón Núñez, and Dr. Emigdio Lola, Vice-Presidents; Dr. Joã de Barros Barreto, Secretary-General, and Dr. Aristides A. Moll, Executive Secretary. The following Committees were appointed: Credentials, Regulations, Program, Resolutions, Program for the X Pan American Sanitary Conference, and Execution of the Recommendations of the IX Pan American Sanitary Conference, held in November, 1934. There were nine special guests, from the National Departments of Health of Chile and Mexico, the Peruvian Embassy, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Army Medical Library, the U. S. Public Health Service, and Georgetown University.

*(To be continued)*