

THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU (*Continued*)*

The resolutions of the IV Conference dealt with many and varied subjects and included the following: Public Health; Sanitary Code; Pan American use of centers for specialized training; teaching; public health career service; tests for the evaluation of health work; health exhibitions; Pan American Health Day; aerial navigation; sanitary engineering; water supplies; vital statistics; foods and nutrition; Pan American standards for vitaminized foods; Pan American nutrition exhibit; campaigns against leprosy, malaria, poliomyelitis; typhoid vaccination; venereal diseases; and postal franchise.

A list of suggested subjects was prepared for the guidance of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau and the Organizing Committee of the XI Pan American Sanitary Conference.

The closing session was held Wednesday, May 8, 1940, at 3:00 P.M.

When compiled, the Proceedings were issued as Publication No. 192 of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau and made a volume of 564 pages, the largest to that date.

Fifth Conference.—At the invitation of Dr. Hugh S. Cumming, Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, issued January 6, 1944, the V Pan American Conference of National Directors of Health met in Washington from April 24 to 29, 1944, a preliminary session having been held April 22. Four years had elapsed since the opening of the IV Conference, which occurred on April 30, 1940. Dr. Hugh S. Cumming and Dr. Aristides A. Moll, Secretary of the Bureau, were elected by acclamation President and Secretary-General, respectively, of the Conference. The following Vice Presidents were also chosen: Dr. Manuel Martínez Báez, of Mexico; Dr. Eugenio Suárez, of Chile; Dr. César Gordillo Zuleta, of Peru; and Dr. Leopoldo Izquieta Pérez, of Ecuador.

The Delegates, from 20 of the American Republics, Canada and British and Dutch Possessions of the West Indies, numbered 57, of which nine were from the United States. This represented a high water mark in attendance, especially from outside the United States. Cuba, Mexico and the United States were represented by five Delegates each; Chile and the Dominican Republic by three each; from Ecuador, Haiti, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela by two each; and the following countries were represented by one Delegate each: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. Bolivia sent no representative. The Pan American Sanitary Bureau, was represented by seven in addition to its *ex-officio* members of the Conference, members of its staff in addition to members of its permanent Committees. The guests of honor in-

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cluded representatives from Canada, British West Indies, Dutch Guiana (Surinam), Curaçao, Jamaica, the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs; the International Bureau of Labor; the U. S. Food & Drug Administration; the U. S. Bureau of Animal Industry; the Rockefeller Foundation; the Commonwealth Fund, and other agencies of the U. S. Government; and representatives of the most important commercial airlines.

The puzzling questions facing the world as a result of the war were reflected in practically all the addresses delivered in the opening session. The Honorable Adolf A. Berle, Assistant Secretary of State of the United States, greeted the assembly on behalf of the Government, as follows:

Though the task of the defense of national health is very great, you are charged with an even greater work. That is the improvement of human material upon which the statesmen and even the civilization of the future must be based. Nations are now judged not merely by their military might, but their economic ability. They are judged by the health and strength of their people. The rate of tuberculosis among children is as carefully watched as the size or equipment of its army. The ability to stamp out malaria and hookworm is a greater national asset than the modern equipment of guns, planes and parachutes. This is particularly true of the Americas. Here are adequate resources on which to found great civilizations. But they can only be organized and developed by healthy, energetic, and industrious men. This human material is in your keeping. The time will come when the history books pay as much attention to the successes and actual operations of public health as they do to the actions and successes of politicians and generals. This is an opportunity for all of you which I personally envy. The man who is able to say at the end of his public service that he has improved the health of his country, and particularly of its children, can rest assured that he has affected history as much, if not more, than any other public servant of his time.

Dr. Thomas Parran, Surgeon General, United States Public Health Service, stated:

For 43 years the health authorities of the American Republics have demonstrated the value of mutual efforts for the improvement of health in this Hemisphere. Of even greater importance than the actual accomplishments in the field of public health has been the demonstration of practical international collaboration which I am sure has and will continue to have significance for the future in other areas of international collaboration.

Dr. Hugh S. Cumming, Director, Pan American Sanitary Bureau said:

Nothing, I think, can show to the world so clearly our solidarity of interest in the cause of the health and welfare of all our people as this Conference, which will consider not only important problems which are always with us, but are rendered more acute by war conditions, such as malaria, typhus fever, and nutrition problems, but more particularly perhaps consideration of such changes as you may deem expedient in the existing Conventions and agreements controlling the sanitary aspects of aerial navigation, both commercial and military. This particular problem perhaps brings before us most important of all our close inter-

relationships with other regions of the earth. This Conference, from this standpoint, is held at a most opportune time, as there will soon be under consideration in some part of Europe the same problem, and I shall hope from your deliberations we can arrive at a common understanding, which will enable us to present the viewpoints of the Western Hemisphere at the proper time at future meetings abroad.

In responding to the welcoming speeches, Dr. João de Barros Barreto, National Director of Health of Brazil especially emphasized the following points:

The Fifth Pan American Conference of National Directors of Health, even more than its predecessors, is destined without doubt to play a significant role in the public health of the Continent. We are entrusted with planning the objectives of public health for the countries of America both in the present moment of war against tyranny and despotism and in the post-war period. It is not necessary to emphasize the importance of the topics to be discussed by the Conference; there are many others under the same subject which could also be submitted to our consideration and could be the object of resolutions and recommendations, although it will not be possible to hold extensive debate on them nor to present full doctrinal arguments. The public health problems which confront us as a result of the war, and which must be met with in the post-war period are indeed many and pressing. Wars themselves create many such problems, some of an importance almost equal to military ones.

In his turn, Dr. Félix Hurtado, Under-Secretary of Public Health of Cuba, answered as follows:

This is not merely a link in the chain of international happenings, but stands out because of meeting at a singularly opportune time. The last Conference of this nature, the IV Pan American Conference of Directors of Health, held in Washington from May 1 to 8, 1940, could not foresee the attack on Pearl Harbor one year later, which threw the American people into the world conflict and also brought closer continental solidarity, causing all the American Republics to join in an active campaign, which fortunately is already today winning a decisive victory for universal democracy. It has always been the primary function and serious responsibility of the State to guard the health of all its people by means of various organizations, following out the general lines laid out in that magnificent international instrument adopted in 1924 at Habana, and known as the Pan American Sanitary Code. However, if the question of safeguarding health at the time that this Code was written was a function of primary importance, and deserved the most careful attention on the part of those responsible for the development of sanitary science as representatives of the Governments, after entering the War and mobilizing great masses of people for duty on the battle fronts as well as for the many activities on the home front, this very problem has become even more of a responsibility. Stress must be placed at this time on the mechanical progress in regard to means of transportation, which today has erased all idea of distance actually reducing to a few hours' flight travel to any point of the globe.

Due to the unsettled conditions created by the world war, as well as serious problems which will undoubtedly face the health authorities during the reconstruction of the post-war period, this meeting was

generally considered to assume unusual importance. The attendance established a new record and the deliberations were seriously and successfully conducted in a spirit of understanding and cooperation. Exhaustive reports were made by the various Committees on Malaria, Typhus, Nutrition, Sanitary Engineering, and Epidemiological and Vital Statistics. Addition of other Committees was recommended and it was also agreed to reorganize the Committee on Public Health Code with a smaller membership provided for a revision of the Pan American Sanitary Code the task to be entrusted to the Committee on Public Health Code, the work to be completed in time for consideration by the XII Pan American Sanitary Conference. The creation of Public Health Attachés at all Embassies in the same form and with the same prerogatives as other diplomatic attachés enjoy was advised in another resolution, which was adopted.

The following topics on the program of the meeting were discussed: improved national and international reporting of communicable diseases; aerial navigation; port sanitation; quarantine measures; adoption of an international health certificate; standardization of regulations governing food and drugs, including biological products; prevention of international spread of animal diseases transmissible to man; relation of social security to public health. As usual the time proved too short to go thoroughly into some of the subjects which had been placed on the program.

As subjects for discussion at the XII Pan American Conference, to be held at Caracas, Venezuela, in 1946, the following were recommended by the V Conference: Uniformity on food and drug legislation; Organization and activities of Health Centers and Units; Epidemiology of Malaria; Epidemiology of Tuberculosis; Zoonoses in general; Health Education; Control of Venereal Diseases; and Post-War Health Problems.

Due recognition was given to the fact that the termination of the war might compel considerable revision of the program by the time the meeting was finally held.

It was also agreed that considerable time would be devoted to revision of the Pan American Sanitary Code and consideration of the reports submitted by the permanent Committees of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau.

In closing Dr .L. M. Debayle, expressed the general feeling:

I should like to remind all our colleagues that this meeting held at this critical moment for humanity has assumed unusual significance for all of us. We should also remember the immense effort all of us, including the sanitarians, must perform on the war front here and elsewhere. Fraternaly embraced, the Americas must remain united body and soul for the defense of our Continent.

(To be continued)