

ADDRESSES DELIVERED IN COMMEMORATION OF PAN AMERICAN HEALTH DAY

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December 2nd is one of the greatest days in the history of the Americas, and I might perhaps quite properly say of mankind.

One hundred and twenty-one years ago, in this very city of Washington an American president told most emphatically the world that politically the Americas were a unit no longer subject to foreign invasion or dominion and devoted thereafter to the cause of freedom and democracy. This was the first definite and concrete declaration that a partnership, or rather brotherhood, of nations existed on this Continent. The Monroe Doctrine was not the mere dictum of man, or even a nation. It expressed the unanimous considerate thinking of Miranda, Bolívar and San Martín, Espejo, Unanue and Thornton, of Monteagudo, Louverture, O'Higgins and Morelos, as well as Jefferson and Hamilton, and also later of Juárez, Sarmiento, Duarte, Martí and Betances.

Through one of the curious coincidences of history, 79 years later, again in this very city of Washington, a group of scientists came together and proclaimed that for health purposes the Americas were a unit, and that all of them would band their efforts in order to combat the worst enemy they had ever met in their struggle for a more abundant life: disease.

Strange as it may seem, the Pan American Union and the Pan American Sanitary Bureau have therefore substantially the same birthday on December 2nd. This is the date we celebrate today, this is the day that for five years all the American Republics have been commemorating perhaps with greater unanimity and enthusiasm than any other similar event.

If one may paraphrase one of the pithiest axioms of the Martyr President, a Continent, cannot endure any more than any other body, half sick and half well. Helping one's neighbor to become healthy is not as some think evidence of unselfishness, but actually the most selfish deed any one can do. Foolish indeed would be that person who would let the house close by burn down without helping to put the fire out. He who neglects aiding his fellow creature to keep his health, runs the risk of catching sickness from him.

This was the conviction which led those farseeing ancestors of ours. This is the principle which has inspired ever since the sanitarians of the Americas, this the impulse behind the efforts of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau since 1902, of the Rockefeller Foundation since 1913, and more recently of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. It is the beginning of this task of cooperation, brotherhood and mutual help which we celebrate today.

But while we honor and greet the past, we also look forward to the day when this unifying force will become even more intensive and effective to the benefit of all our countries and the good of all mankind, which may find in this celebration an example, a promise and a hope.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of our celebration here today will be the delivery of prizes to the winners in the hemispheric contest for Pan American Health Day. We salute those children who already join their efforts to ours in full realization that without health, neither happiness nor progress are attainable.

In concluding, I urge those present to stand and repeat the motto of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau: Health to the New World!