## SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

### THE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH BOARD OF THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

SECTIONS of the report of the International Health Board of the Rockefeller Foundation for 1922, made public in advance of the general distribution of the volume, show that during the year the board worked in cooperation with the governments of seventy states and countries throughout the world.

The activities reported include a review of the history and objects of the International Health Board; the campaign against yellow fever in Mexico and South America; surveys, field experiments and demonstrations in malaria control at home and abroad; world-wide efforts in the control of hookworm disease; the extension of county health work in the United States and Brazil; the development of public health laboratory services, public health nursing services, and schools of hygiene in various countries; cooperation with the health section of the League of Nations; and the extension of training through fellowships.

The International Health Board had its inception in an organization known as the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission, established by Mr. John D. Rockefeller in 1909, which in 1913 was supplanted by the International Health Board, created by the newly organized Rockefeller Foundation with the immediate object of extending "to other countries and peoples the work of eradicating hookworm disease as opportunity offers, and so far as possible to follow up the treatment and cure of this disease with the establishment of agencies for the promotion of public sanitation and the spread of the knowledge of scientific medicine."

Reviewing briefly the activities of the board since 1913, the report points out in the following paragraphs the fundamental principles on which its work has been based.

In the course of almost ten years of cooperative service with government authorities, hookworm infection the world over has been measurably diminished; progress has been made toward reducing the ravages of malaria; and a relentless campaign is still being waged against yellow fever wherever its danger flag appears. From the outset, however, the board has maintained the conviction that public health is essentially a function of government. No private and temporary agency, whatever its resources, could or should discharge responsibilities which, by their nature, belong to the constituted authorities of the commonwealth. Private enterprise, therefore, may be best employed in awakening public opinion and thereby encouraging state and county officials to establish permanent agencies for public health work. Responsibility for the control and cure of any one disease has never been assumed by the board; but aid has been given in control and cure where such steps might be expected to demonstrate a need and suggest a possible program.

Lastly, it has been clearly recognized that continued advance in preventive medicine the world over depends upon an adequate supply of skilled public health servants. Research has been aided in special cases where it might lead to the more effective application of existing knowledge to the control of disease. Training schools for health officers, nurses and visitors have been promoted; contributions have been made toward the establishment of schools of public hygiene. And finally, the fruits of these enterprises have been made accessible to a broader circle by means of international fellowships.

The demonstration and cure of disease arouses a public sentiment which expresses itself in legislative appropriations for specific and general health purposes. Progress on the administrative side, in turn, creates a demand for technically trained men and women to carry out new programs. Thus public enlightenment, government machinery and technical education and research are bound up in a sure sequence which may be traced in some of the activities of the board during 1922.

### EXPLOSION AT THE BUREAU OF STANDARDS

THE *Journal* of the Washington Academy of Sciences gives the following account of the explosion at the Bureau of Standards:

On the afternoon of September 20 a violent explosion followed by fire occurred in the Dynamometer Laboratory of the Bureau of Standards. One man was killed instantly, three others injured so seriously that they died during the night, and four others seriously burned or cut. The heroism of the survivors of the staff in rescuing the injured from the furiously burning wreckage and in shutting off the electric circuits and the ammonia valves minimized the loss of life and property.

The explosion occurred in the altitude chamber which is used in testing the performance of aircraft engines under the conditions of low pressure and temperature obtaining at high altitudes. At the time of the accident the room was being used in investigating the performance of an automobile engine, at temperatures corresponding to winter operation, using various grades of gasoline. The work was intended to determine the possible increase in gasoline production per barrel of crude oil, with the accompanying conservation of our national resources, by the use of gasoline of lower volatility.

The explosion was due to the ignition of an explosive mixture in the chamber.

The dead are: Logan L. Lauer, Urban J. Cook, Stephen N. Lee, Joseph Kendig. The injured are: Henry K. Cummings, Frank E. Richardson, Roger Birdsell, George W. Elliott, C. N. Smith, R. F. Kohr.

Most of these men were college graduates with experience and skill in research work, and a grave blow to science and engineering must be added to the human loss to their families and colleagues. Thus grows the long list of those who have given their lives for the increase of human knowledge and welfare.