

## SCIENCE NEWS

*Science Service, Washington, D. C.*

## THE HAVANA CONFERENCE ON INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL COOPERATION

TRANSFER of the scientific and cultural societies of the world to the Western Hemisphere was forecast by the second Pan-American Congress on Intellectual and Cultural Cooperation meeting in Havana during the past week. The congress, representing nineteen American Republics, voted to invite to the New World the International Scientific Union, with headquarters in London, the International Union of Academies, formerly located in Brussels, the International Committee of Historical Sciences, the International Library Association and all other world cultural associations now suffering from the hindrances of war. Such large-scale transfer of scientific and historical associations would make this continent the world's center of learning. It would make the Western Hemisphere the coordinating center for all scholars and educators.

The congress voted to offer locations for these societies in various American Republics. With the decline of scientific research in Europe, it was felt, obligation and opportunity come to the New World to take over this function.

Also voted by the Congress of Government Representatives was a motion to recommend special passports and travel credentials for teachers, scientists and newspapermen, as these persons are especially qualified to spread mutual understanding and to create good-will among the nations of the Americas. Newspapermen were referred to as "professors of the popular masses" and "directors of public opinion." Special passports, and reductions in travel fares, would make possible a wider exchange of these men among our American republics and speed the day when we shall work and plan together for the Western Hemisphere.

Free entrance for all books and printed publications from country to country was urged in order to further mutual understanding by reducing costs. A commission was set up to compile a list of the most important books in each American Republic, and it is planned that these shall be published, one by each country, under the title, "Literary Masterpieces of the Americas." They would be printed in their original language, and also in translation. This would make it possible for a Pan-American literature to be developed.

Bureaus for disseminating medical information were also recommended, so that hygiene and public health discoveries of one country would be available to the others. An All-America Radio Office has already been established in Havana as a clearing center for all long- and short-wave programs between the Americas.

Because the question of copyright on printed materials has caused confusion in the past, a special committee was set up to work out a plan for better protection of literary works, songs and other works when circulated from country to country. It was lamented that piracy of these works had been known in the past and had hindered cooperation and confidence.—J. H. FURBAY.

## A POSSIBLE CURE FOR LIVER CIRRHOSIS

CHEESE and a vitamin may be the future cure for cirrhosis of the liver, fatal condition once known as "drunkard's liver."

Success in both treating and preventing the condition with a B vitamin and casein, chief protein of milk and cheese, is announced by Dr. J. V. Lowry, Dr. Floyd S. Daft, Dr. W. H. Sebrell, Dr. L. L. Ashburn and Dr. R. D. Lillie, of the U. S. Public Health Service.

Laboratory rats were the patients in this work, but the report comes hard on the heels of a report from two New York physicians that human liver cirrhosis patients were successfully treated by "a highly nutritious diet supplemented with vitamin B concentrates."

Taken together, the reports suggest that the day is fast approaching when a diagnosis of cirrhosis of the liver will no longer be equivalent to a death warrant, especially since the New York patients were given a diet which seems to have included the two substances that helped the rats.

Choline and casein are the two diet constituents successfully used by the investigators of the Public Health Service to treat and prevent liver cirrhosis in their rats. They had previously discovered that they could produce the condition by keeping the rats on a diet lacking in these substances, whether or not they got alcohol with the diet. Choline is believed to be one of the B vitamins. It is always found with these vitamins in foods and is in most vitamin B concentrates.

Dr. Arthur J. Patek, Jr., and Dr. Joseph Post started their diet treatment of human liver cirrhosis patients in 1939, more than two years before this report. They based the treatment on their observation that, in addition to signs of liver failure, the patients were malnourished and particularly lacked the B vitamins.

Almost half of these patients, 45 per cent., were alive at the end of the second year, they now report in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*.—JANE STAFFORD.

## CONSCRIPTS REJECTED BECAUSE OF VENEREAL DISEASE

WORKS PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION "shock troops" of workers trained in non-technical aspects of venereal disease control will shortly begin assistance of rehabilitation of Selective Service registrants rejected because of venereal disease.

Rehabilitation of rejectees and workers in vital defense industries is part of a model venereal disease program outlined by the U. S. Public Health Service. Under it, young men rejected by the Selective Service or the Army because of syphilis or gonorrhea will be traced and encouraged to undergo treatment either by their private physician or at a public clinic. Further, infected persons in the civilian population near Army cantonments known to have passed their disease to soldiers will be traced and put under treatment.

The WPA shock troops will relieve sorely pressed doctors and nurses in contact tracing and clerical work.

They will be assigned shortly to aid the venereal disease programs in Colorado, Louisiana, Tennessee and Florida. Oklahoma, California and Oregon have just received their requested quota of WPA shock troops. These are states where mobilization and the booming defense industries have greatly increased the normal problems of venereal disease control.

The augmented venereal disease programs were made possible by allocation of \$5,015,864 in WPA funds by President Roosevelt.

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CORPORATION

HOWLER monkeys have a better foreign policy and scheme of international relations than science has yet taught man to use, according to Dr. Edward L. Thorndike, eminent educational psychologist of Teachers College, Columbia University.

At a luncheon meeting of the Psychological Corporation honoring its founder, Dr. James McKeen Cattell, pioneer psychologist, Professor Thorndike said:

"The howler monkeys manage the matter as follows: For the most part, each nation stays in its own territory, minding its own business.

"If one nation encroaches upon another's territory, the invaded nation meets them with a vigorous attack of howls.

"The invaders howl back.

"The contest continues until, by a beneficent provision in the brain of the howler monkey, the side that is out-howled is moved to retire. Not a drop of blood is spilt; not an atom of food or shelter is destroyed. No blot stains the national honor, since each citizen howls his loudest until his inner nature says 'Hold! Enough!' or 'Howled Enough!'

"The absolute justice of this procedure is dubious, since there may be a very low correlation between rightful ownership and vociferousness. But the outcomes are surely far better than in man, where the large wins over the small, the bellicose over the peaceful, and force over reason.

"It is an elementary principle of psychology that we should not try to dam up and push back the energy and passions of men, but should rather direct and entice them into desirable channels. It has been the world's tragedy of the last half century that effort was not made and ways were not found to encourage the energy and ambitions of the German people and of their rulers toward lines of action that would be good for them and for the rest of the world.

"It is perhaps impertinent to suggest that our governments should study psychology. But I can at least recommend that psychologists study government.

"If we do the work we should do in that field, we may hope to see psychologists attached to the Department of State."

### ITEMS

THE scientific exhibits at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, which were placed there eighteen years ago by the General Electric Research Laboratory, have been removed to provide more space for scientists working on war problems. However, it has been an-

nounced by Dr. W. D. Coolidge, vice-president of the company in charge of research, that some of the exhibits will be shown at the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science at their Christmas week meeting in Dallas, Texas. After that, the exhibits may be shown in museums and schools through the country and eventually be returned to the academy after the emergency.

THE Lisbon earthquake has been traced to its epicenter by seismologists of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, aided by observatories in the United States and Canada, reporting through Science Service by wire and radio. The spot under the ocean where the great shake centered is 600 miles southwest of Lisbon and 100 miles north of the Madeira Islands, in the region of latitude 34 degrees north, longitude 17 degrees west. Time of origin was 1:03.9 P.M., E.C.T., on Tuesday, November 25. The distance from Lisbon is approximately the same as that from Charleston, S. C., to Philadelphia. The epicenter may have been located deep beneath the sea bottom, possibly as much as 200 kilometers, or 125 miles.

CONTINUED high standards for this country's insulin supply, which means the difference between life and death for thousands of diabetic sufferers, will be maintained, if steps reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* are carried out. Insulin patent rights, which control the quality of insulin manufactured and sold in the United States and Canada, are now held by the Insulin Committee of the University of Toronto, where the insulin discovery was made. These patents expire on December 24. After that date, insulin can be made without license from the university, and consequently uninspected and unsafe insulin might get on the market. A flood of uninspected foreign brands, the *Journal* states, has already reached this country, to be distributed as soon as the patents expire. To meet the danger of unsafe insulin, the Board of Trustees of the U. S. Pharmacopeia has recommended that the U. S. Government take over the functions of the Insulin Committee when the patents expire. This would insure continuation of the double check on insulin standards—once by the manufacturer, once by the government. Under the proposal, the Food and Drug Administration would not release any product for general sale or distribution until it is assured that the product meets with standards and assays which the U. S. Pharmacopeia will specify.

A SEVERE malady, of which young women are the principal victims, has been successfully controlled by a rare and difficult operation pioneered by thoracic surgeons in the University of California Medical School. This affliction, bronchial adenoma, is caused by a tumor in one of the large bronchi, air passages which lead from the windpipe to the lungs. The condition is often mistaken for tuberculosis or cancer, and attacks young people mostly, 77 per cent. of the cases reported being under forty years of age and 64 per cent. of them women. The California doctors report that twenty of these operations have been performed, every one of them successfully, restoring patients to an active, normal life. They believe that the operation could be generally undertaken in such cases with a low mortality expectancy.