

News of Science

World Health Year Plans Advanced

Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Arthur S. Flemming recently urged that a great world crusade of health for peace be launched through the International Health Year, a health study period that has been proposed to parallel the International Geophysical Year of 1957-58. His appeal was made at the opening dinner session of the second National Conference on World Health, which was held in Washington, 7-9 May, under the auspices of the National Citizens Committee for the World Health Organization.

Milton S. Eisenhower, president of Johns Hopkins University, was chairman of the conference, which brought together leaders of Congress and of the executive branch of the Federal Government and representatives of organizations and industrial companies interested in health and international relations. The principal objectives of the conference were to discuss the international health legislation now before the Congress, to appraise the value of international health programs in developing habits of cooperation among nations, and to outline a future International Health Year.

Stevenson First to Propose

The original suggestion for such a Year came from the former Governor of Illinois, Adlai Stevenson, in an address delivered 8 June 1958 at Michigan State University. On 9 June, Senate majority leader Lyndon B. Johnson (D-Tex.) had Stevenson's remarks printed in the *Congressional Record*. That same day Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) commended the address on the Senate floor. Humphrey has been the dedicated champion of the proposal ever since. In mid-August 1958 Senate Concurrent Resolution 99, which he had introduced, was passed. It said: "The President of the United States is hereby invited to extend to the other nations of the world, through the World Health Organization, and related organizations, an invitation for the designation of representatives to meet and discuss the feasibility of designating an International Health and

Medical Research Year, at such early date as adequate preparations can be made, or of other methods of developing such intensive international cooperation in the field of health as will lead toward the discovery and exchange of the answers on coping with major killing and crippling diseases which afflict mankind."

Some 2 weeks later, on 6 September, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic presented to the United Nations General Assembly a resolution for the organization of an International Public Health and Medical Research Year. Under the auspices of 22 nations, including the United States, the resolution was approved in December 1958.

Next, in January 1959, the Health Year was considered by the World Health Organization's executive board, which asked the WHO director general to prepare plans for the proposed Year for presentation at the 12th WHO assembly. That assembly is now in session in Geneva.

Forum Defines Health Year

Participants in the recent National Conference on World Health in Washington included most of the U.S. delegation to the current Geneva meeting. Some of this group played an active part in a forum on the International Health Year that was held under the chairmanship of James E. Perkins, managing director of the National Tuberculosis Association. The panelists were Albert W. Dent, president of Dillard University; James E. Hundley, special assistant for international health at the National Institutes of Health; and Julius N. Cahn, project director of the International Health Study of the Senate Committee on Government Operations.

Cahn, who has been working closely with Senator Humphrey on the Health Year, was the first speaker. His statement, which represented the views of many of the discussants heard later, presented seven points formulated to help assure the success of the Year.

1) The program should be based on the individual nations' own felt needs.

2) There should be strong cooperation by national governments, but basically—as in the International Geophysi-

cal Year—success will be dependent on private initiative, the initiative of the complex of private scientific and other organizations.

3) The Year will require the enthusiastic support of the medical profession everywhere, but it should be broad enough in concept to allow the fullest possible contribution by laymen as well.

4) All the life sciences must be involved.

5) In addition to WHO, the other health-oriented international organizations that are allied with the U.N. should participate, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the International Labor Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the United Nations Children's Fund.

6) Participants should be willing to undertake bold experiments in the health field. There must be an effort to establish new models of experimental collaboration, new approaches, new techniques.

7) Provision should be made for continuation of the projects started during the International Health Year so that the momentum gained during the period will be sustained in years to come.

Cahn then mentioned specific areas that ought to be involved in the project. He emphasized that the most important single IHY program should be the expansion of epidemiological services throughout the world and the strengthening of data concerning the distribution of various diseases. Another great need that could be met by IHY would be that for increased training of professional and nonprofessional medical personnel; this would include increased exchange of scientists in the health field and the organization of international seminars. Further, particular attention must be paid to the problems of providing the world's supply of water and food. The various nations should attempt to single out one or two diseases for a specific campaign of eradication. Examples given, in addition to malaria and smallpox, currently the subject of control programs, were tuberculosis, cholera, and schistosomiasis. In like manner, certain important problems should be singled out for intensified research. Cahn suggested as possibilities radiation and air pollution. There should be health education of the masses. And finally, certain broad projects should be selected for emphasis during the IHY that would allow citizens to do things for themselves so that they would feel a sense of participation. For example, in the United States this might be achieved through a special campaign to increase the number of women who take annual diagnostic tests for uterine cancer.

The next panelist to present his views was James Hundley, who proposed that

each country hold a meeting to reach agreement regarding the final plan for the Year for that particular country. He pointed out that the Year has two elements: an international cooperative element and the individual programs of the various nations.

With regard to a possible national plan for this country, Hundley made several specific suggestions that fell into three classes: research projects of special importance to the United States, research on problems as important to other countries as to the United States, and research that would be of benefit almost entirely to other countries.

Albert W. Dent was the final panelist to speak. He stressed the importance of citizen participation in the programs selected and the need to evolve better techniques in educating and motivating people to participate in health programs, such as in the program of vaccination against poliomyelitis and that of tuberculosis control. He pointed out that public apathy has developed with regard to both of these diseases.

Plan Being Considered by WHO

In the general discussion that followed the panelists' presentations, H. van Zile Hyde of the U.S. Public Health Service, and U.S. member of the WHO executive board, outlined briefly what the director of the World Health Organization is proposing with respect to the International Health Year at the current World Health Assembly in Geneva. The object of the Health Year, as presented by the director general's report, is "to stimulate, primarily on a national basis, the intensification of international cooperation in

carefully selected aspects of health and of medical research." This will involve the intensification of field activities in the control or eradication of specific diseases and the intensification of research related to WHO's growing program. Examples of field activity mentioned by the director general include renewed emphasis on malaria and smallpox eradication and installation of piped water supplies. As examples of fields for increased research, he cited cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and virus diseases. The director general further suggested that national committees be formed throughout the world to stimulate interest in and to plan for the IHY.

The Washington forum carried this idea further by proposing that as a framework for the International Health Year a series of national assemblies be held, dealing with health problems in the respective countries, and that the year might close with a climatic congress held in connection with the World Health Assembly in the spring of 1963. The forum session ended with unanimous passage of a resolution that read: "Forum No. 2 recommends urging the U.S. Delegation to the Twelfth World Health Assembly to support in the Assembly the designation of an International Health Year, to start in 1961, and further recommends that the National Citizens Committee for the World Health Organization, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the Congress, and other groups give all possible support to the project."

Under last September's U.N. resolution, WHO has been invited to report on the International Health Year to the

U.N.'s Economic and Social Council at its 28th session this July, and to the General Assembly at its 14th session, which will begin in September.

In the United States, Congressional sources confidently predict that adequate funds will be provided for the IHY once the appropriate scientific authorities, governmental and nongovernmental, have developed specific programs for the Year. As in the case of the International Geophysical Year, bodies such as the National Academy of Sciences, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare are being asked to draft the framework for the International Health Year program that will eventually be submitted to Congress for consideration.

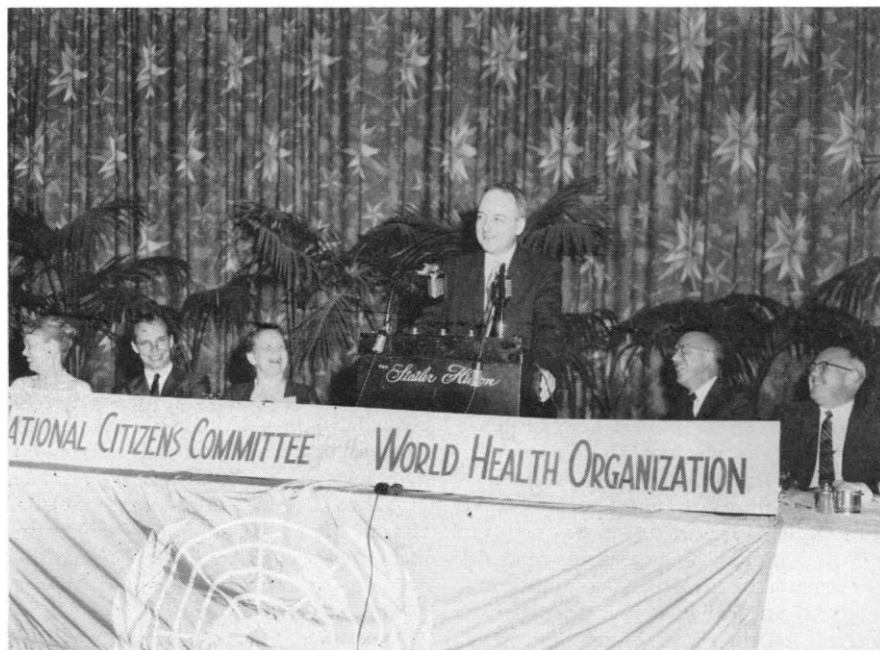
Reports Disagree on Radiation Hazards

The issue of radiation dangers continues to stir wide controversy among Congressmen, scientists, and journalists in Washington. A flurry of reports, often contradictory in their conclusions, is behind the current flare-up of the radiation issue that first received public attention during the 1956 presidential campaign.

Publication last month of a report by the National Committee on Radiation Protection and Measurement started the controversy. This report made substantial downward revisions in the committee's previous estimates of the dangers posed by strontium-90. Another report, issued by an international group, made a contrary recommendation and suggested that the current "permissibility" limits be lowered. This conflict caused repercussions all over Washington. The Joint Atomic Energy Committee set up hearings on the issue which were designed to be the most thorough yet. Columnists and newsletter publishers vied with one another to get the international report, which had been published in England, but which was not available here. A Washington science writer, criticized for one of his stories on the issue, defended himself before the Congress. The controversy even reached the confirmation hearings of former AEC chairman Strauss. One commentator suggestively pointed to the fact that the National Committee on Radiation Protection and Measurement has four members who are AEC employees.

United States Report

In its report, the National Committee on Radiation Protection and Measurement doubled its estimate of the amount of strontium-90 that could be allowed to accumulate in the human body without



Secretary Arthur S. Flemming addresses the National Conference on World Health.