

# THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

## HEALTH ORGANISATION.

(By H. Simpson Newland, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.B., M.S., F.R.C.S.)

One of the most important functions of the League of Nations is to take steps, in matters of international concern, for the prevention and control of diseases. These functions were delegated to the Permanent Health Organisation, which was constituted at the first Assembly of the members of the League of Nations in 1920. The most important functions of the Health Organisation are as follows:—1. To advise the League in matters affecting health. 2. To bring administrative health authorities in different countries into closer touch with each other. 3. To organise and simplify interchange of information, and adopt common precautionary measures in connection with diseases affecting more than one country. 4. To promote international agreements necessary for the proper study of health. 5. To co-operate with the International Labor Organisation for the protection of workers against disease, sickness, and injury. 6. To co-operate with the International Red Cross Societies and advise other voluntary associations on health questions. 7. To organise health missions with the consent of the countries chiefly concerned. The executive functions of the Permanent Health Organisation are centred in a Provisional Health Committee (destined soon to become permanent), which obviously has an almost boundless scope for its activities in health matters of international interest.

In combating the spread of epidemic diseases this committee delegates its powers to the "Epidemic Commission." Thus to assist the Polish Government in its fight against typhus, the Commission started a sanitary cordon with hospitals and disinfectant stations. In January, 1922, the medical director of the secretariat of the League issued a report on the situation in Eastern Europe, and showed how the whole problem of epidemics there had been greatly intensified by the spread of disease in the famine-stricken provinces of Russia. The flood of Russian refugees and of Polish re-immigrants from these districts during the autumn of 1921 broke through the sanitary cordon; and epidemics of every kind consequently spread throughout the Russian border States and seriously menaced the whole of Western Europe. Alarmed at the prospect, the Polish Government called on the League of Nations to summon immediately a technical conference to study the situation, and recommend measures to counteract and grave danger. On March 26, 1922, the Conference assembled at Warsaw. Besides the European members of the League of Nations, representatives were sent from Germany, Russia, Soviet Ukraine, Hungary, and Turkey. The Conference decided that no economic reconstruction of Europe was possible till the local sanitary conditions in Russia and the Ukraine were ameliorated, and it therefore recommended that the source of trouble in Russia itself should be dealt with by the control of migration and an increase of hospitals, sanitary equipment, and food. It was decided to entrust the work to the Epidemic Commission of the League, which strengthened the sanitary cordon in East Poland, and proceeded to attack the epidemics of cholera and typhus in the Donetz basin in South Russia, a dangerous centre. The Soviet Government alone stated that they would prefer an international commission for the execution of the work.

### Sanitary Defence.

The Epidemic Commission acts through the public health and sanitary organisations in the countries concerned. It concentrates on strengthening these organisations as the best permanent means of stopping disease. The quarantine work of the Commission has played an important part in the repatriation of prisoners of war and refugees from Russia. It has helped to build up a permanent system of sanitary defence in Eastern Europe on the borders of Poland and Russia, in territory some 100 miles on both sides of the boundary laid down by the peace of Riga, October, 1920. This work is still hampered by insufficient support on the part of the sanitary authorities (especially in Southern Russia), and by lack of funds. The British Government has promised £100,000 if other Governments unite

in contributing £200,000. Further work has been done by the Health Organisation in setting up an international service of epidemiological intelligence and public health statistics. Up to date epidemiological bulletins have been issued at short intervals. In this work the International Health Board of the Rockefeller foundation has assisted by placing at the disposal of the League a subsidy of \$2,840 dollars for a period of five years for the epidemiological service. Recent bulletins show that, as a result of the large influx of destitute and starving Greek refugees from Turkey to their native land, typhus is rampant. General vaccination of the refugees has caused a rapid decrease of smallpox.

An epidemic disease known as Encephalitis lethargica, often fatal, has of recent years become notifiable in most countries. This year, information was received, from certain localities, of an increase in the prevalence of the disease. The Health Section of the League, therefore addressed a letter to the Ministry of Health in each European country, requesting information, (1) on the number of cases notified in January, February and March 1923; (2) on the number of cases in each subsequent month until no unusual prevalence appears to exist; (3) on the locality where cases occur. That this action has been taken shows how alive the Health Section is to the importance of promptly detecting the presence of an epidemic disease of international distribution, in order that measures for its prevention may be considered. The Health Organisation of the League recognises the importance of not limiting its activities to any one part of the world. As regards epidemiological information, it must serve as an intermediary between all countries. This is a difficult task, which can only be accomplished by stages. A commission recently sent to the Near East succeeded in defining the sources of epidemiological information in the Eastern Mediterranean countries; it also brought back a draft convention on anti-epidemic and quarantine measures. With a similar object, but with a more limited scope, another commission is being organised to obtain all the necessary information regarding the ports in the Far East, and the spread of epidemic diseases to all parts of the world. As traffic and transport by land, sea and air between Australia and other countries become expedited, the chances of epidemic diseases reaching these shores from infected countries beyond the seas will become greater.

### Specialised Health Services.

It is greatly in the interest of the Commonwealth that the work of the League should be supported in this respect, and much satisfaction will be felt that the Prime Minister has deputed Sir Neville Howse to represent Australia at the next Assembly of the League at Geneva in September. Africa has not been neglected by the League, as experts have been invited to make a united study of the incidence of sleeping sickness and tuberculosis among the indigenous population of Equatorial Africa, and to suggest any inter-Government steps which might be taken for a successful campaign against these plagues. Believing that sentiments of mutual understanding and toleration between States would be promoted by a system of interchange of their public health personnel, the Health Committee has decided to send to Belgium five officials of the Italian Public Health Service, with twelve or fifteen colleagues from Poland and Czecho-Slovakia. The intention is that the visitors shall first attend lectures on the principles of the theory and practice of the administration of the various branches of the Belgian Public Health Service. They will make the necessary visits to institutions, and will exchange information regarding the methods followed in their own countries. Finally, they are to be distributed among the various public health services to work for periods with the public health officials of the country. They will share the life of their Belgian colleagues, and will accompany them in their tours of inspection, participating in their office work and their various technical consultations.

Under the system proposed, exchanges may be carried out among the staffs of the specialised services. For example, the public health administration of Brazil might send several of its technical experts to the United States, and the public health services of Australia might also benefit by mutual exchange of technical experts with those of Japan and the Dutch Indies. The system of exchange is to start with European countries, but to be of real use it should be increased in character, and should be applied to the public health services of all countries throughout the world. Financial aid to the system of exchange has been given by the Rockefeller Foundation, which has placed at the dis-

posal of the Health Organisation a subsidy of 60,000 dollars for three years.

Among the questions upon which it was essential to ensure more complete co-ordination of the individual efforts of the various countries, the Health Organisation could not neglect the specific prophylactic and therapeutic domain of preventive medicine hygiene. For this reason the Health Committee decided to take the initiative in co-ordinated research, which will be undertaken by ten Bacteriological State Institutes in various parts of the world in order to establish the standard of anti-toxic units on an experimental basis.

Modern medicine employs sera in the treatment of diphtheria and meningitis, and in the prevention of tetanus. So far, no international agreement has been reached regarding the potency of the various sera. Such an agreement could not be reached by theoretical discussions. Comparisons had to be made of the agents employed in the various countries, and it was necessary to undertake experiments in these various institutes, with the same technique for all, and under strictly defined conditions. This is perhaps the first experiment of the kind which has ever been organised. The progress realised has made it possible to convene a small conference of the institutes taking part in research work on diphtheria and tetanus, in order to establish a standard serum on the basis of the experiments made during 1921-1922. In this sphere also it is desirable that research work should be undertaken in laboratories throughout the world, and that the programme of future investigations should take into account the necessity for genuine world-wide collaboration. The splendidly staffed and equipped Australian Commonwealth Serum Laboratory should be called upon to play its part in this work. It is obvious that the success of this work, founded on genuine international collaboration may lead to very remarkable results.

### Traffic in Dangerous Drugs.

The traffic in opium and cocaine still continues to engage the attention of the League of Nations Advisory Committee. This Committee has hitherto held its meetings in private, and has reported its decisions to the Assembly of the League of Nations, whose meetings are open to the press.

At the meeting of the Advisory Committee, held at Geneva last January, several members expressed the opinion that the greater the publicity the greater the chance of public opinion bringing about the cessation of the traffic. The Chinese member of the Committee, Chao-Hsin-Chu, said that in China the opium problem could never be solved without the help of public opinion. Chinese people were afraid of foreign intervention. If proper publicity were given to the proceedings of the League with regard to the opium question this wear would be removed and public opinion in China stimulated. The opinion would have its effect on the Chinese military leaders (who ruled over two-thirds of the opium producing provinces) and would compel them to suppress the cultivation of opium. The cultivation of the poppy and the traffic in opium were prohibited by law in China. What traffic existed was illicit.

The Committee ultimately decided to continue to hold their meetings in private, as their resolutions were placed before the Assembly of the League of Nations, which were held in public, and at which the resolutions could be debated.

The Advisory Committee is of the opinion that the production of opium should be controlled so as to suffice for the legitimate needs only of the world, such needs being exclusively medical and scientific. The Committee is confronted with the difficulty that two-thirds of the opium of the world is produced by Turkey and Persia, neither of whom adheres to the International Opium Convention of 1921. Efforts are being made to get the Governments of these countries to signify their adherence, and there appears to be a likelihood of their doing so. India produces one-third of the world's supply of opium, and it is possible, in the event of Turkey and Persia refusing to put in force the Convention, and thus control their imports and exports of opium, that the Governments which are parties to the Convention will refuse to issue licenses for the import of opium from the recalcitrant countries. Such action would, of course, give India a virtual monopoly. In the event of India obtaining a monopoly, her representative on the Committee stated that he could definitely assure the Committee that there would be no over-production and that the present charge of 4,000 rupees per chest made by the Government, which was 500 rupees per chest lower than the public auction price, would not be increased.

Statistics are being obtained from each country which adopts the International Opium Convention to determine what are its needs of opium, derivatives of opium, and other narcotic drugs, exclusively medical and scientific. The Advisory Committee will then be in a position to determine to what extent these drugs shall be produced or manufactured.

One does not look for humor in a publication of the League of Nations, but some of the reports on the cultivation of the poppy telegraphed by the provincial Chinese officials to the Ministry of the Interior, Peking, in 1922, help to contribute to the gaiety of nations. One runs as follows:—"The poppy cultivation was very extensive nearly everywhere in the district, because it was out of the control of the authorities, so that the prohibition was not enforced. When the Governor sent troops to endeavor to destroy the poppy the mobs came out against them. It took time to conquer them, but they were finally convinced and gave way to the troops, and the poppy was destroyed. The Governor intended to punish these stubborn natives, but they were leniently disposed of on the guarantee provided by the Chamber of Commerce, the Agricultural Association, and the Educational Association of Luang Chi." This is a dispatch of the Governor of Hainchang to the Ministry of the Interior, Peking:—"Prohibition of poppy cultivation has been strictly enforced in the province. This has been testified to by the British Vice-Consul at Kasat. Last April he made a trip from Kasat through the districts of Kau-Ke-Su, Bai-Chung, En-ju, and Yen-Chi, and also from Kan-Ke-Su, and Ping-Tah-Pan, as far as Yi-li. He did not find any poppy cultivation on the journey of several thousand li, which took him over a hundred days. April is the poppy season, when the flowers can easily be seen. Certainly the eyes of the British Vice-Consul could not have been deceived if any poppy plantation had been in existence." Deception or no deception, we may take pride in the reflection that the influence of the League of Nations is brought to bear on one and all, from a humble, heathen Chinese to the proudest rulers of the earth.

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Mr. George Ziesing, who will to-day enter into partnership with Mr. W. A. Rollison, solicitor, was admitted to the Bar in December, 1919, and was appointed Assistant Parliamentary Draftsman in September, 1922. He is a son of Mr. C. J. Ziesing, of Mile-End, and was born at Port Augusta, and educated at the Christian Brothers' College, Adelaide. He had a brilliant scholastic career. He passed the Junior Public Examination in 1908 (when he won the Tennyson medal for English literature) and the Senior Public Examination in the same year, and later he completed his law studies at the Adelaide University. Mr. Ziesing entered the Attorney-General's Department of the public service in 1910, and was articled to the then Parliamentary Draftsman (Dr. Richards) in 1914. He enlisted with the A.I.F. in 1917, saw active service in France in that and the following year, and, having been invalided to England in August, 1918, was there convalescent when the armistice was signed.

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## THE MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY.

### ABOLISHING THE SENATE.

Melbourne, July 31.  
The new University Bill in the Legislative Assembly provides for the abolition of the Senate and the extension of the University Council from 23 to 32 members. The council will be appointed partly by the Government and partly by various interests, who will have a right of choice. The State endowment is increased from £35,000 to £40,000 a year. Provision is made for establishing a school of commerce, towards which the Government will grant £8,500, and various interests will contribute. Provision will also be made for loan funds for students.