

**AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION**
82nd ANNUAL MEETING: BUFFALO
OCTOBER 11-15

[FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT]

The annual meeting of the American Public Health Association in Buffalo was attended by over 3,000 delegates representing every branch of public health in the United States of America. Below are noted some of the many topics discussed during the meeting.

Poliomyelitis Vaccine and Cancer

Special interest was taken in a paper by Dr. R. F. KORNS (Albany, N.Y.) on the design and operation of the field trial of the Salk poliomyelitis vaccine. Some 1,830,000 children in the United States, three Canadian provinces, and Finland are now under close observation, nearly half a million of them having received the test vaccine. To date no official disclosure of the initial results has been made by the investigators, but a preliminary report by an independent group under Dr. Thomas Francis, jun., of the Poliomyelitis Vaccine Evaluation Centre, University of Michigan, is expected next April, only a few months in advance of the next poliomyelitis season. Dr. Korn emphasized the intense concern on the part of the profession, school authorities, and the public in the development of a safe and practical immunizing agent against paralytic poliomyelitis.

At a session on lung cancer and its association with cigarette smoking, the Public Health Cancer Association voted to advise the public to stop cigarette smoking. But the medical scientific director of the tobacco industry's research committee declared that no convincing clinical or experimental evidence of such an association had yet been produced. "Lung cancer in men," Dr. LEVIN said, "has not been linked with any constitutional or hormonal abnormality, nor has it been shown that cigarette smokers have any inherent constitutional or hormonal abnormality as suggested by certain investigators."

Dr. GOLDEN, of Cornell University, gave a report on an analysis of 722 persons who had reported to tumour diagnostic clinics for a check-up. As many as 42% were found to be suffering from cancer. This pointed, he thought, to the need for better education of the public in the symptoms of malignant disease.

Industrial Health

In the Industrial Hygiene Section Dr. GOLDNER described a study of the hearing of shipyard workers. Six hundred workers were examined, and four hundred of these had various degrees of occupational deafness. His conclusions were that noisy machinery should be redesigned if possible, but otherwise employees should work at noisy jobs for only short periods at a time.

In an investigation into absenteeism among 1,300 women telephone operators and 1,500 male craftsmen in the telephone industry, a team from Cornell found that one-third of the workers were responsible for 75% to 80% of the time lost. This group was mainly composed of the unhappy, the frustrated, and those with emotional upsets and moods. They experienced three to ten times as much minor and major illness as those with the best records.

Dr. A. MASSEY, chief medical officer, Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance, addressed the Medical Care Section on "Industrial Injuries under the National Insurance Scheme in Great Britain." He showed how employers' liability had been replaced by State insurance, and described the present medical adjudication machinery. The Ministry's research responsibilities were among other matters covered in a paper which attracted much attention.

Health of Schoolchildren

There were a number of papers dealing with the physical and mental health of pupils and the training of teachers as health educators. Dr. CHARLES WILSON, of Yale, called for a study of sanitary conditions and practices in school lunch schemes, for he considered that there were needless outbreaks of food-borne diseases among schoolchildren. More than ten million schoolchildren in the United States eat noon meals, yet there are serious questions of cleanliness in some food-service operations, such as dishwashing, food storage, and refrigeration. Dr. AUSTIN HILL told the conference that only 35% of all schoolchildren in America have good diets despite the availability of sufficient food. Poor nutrition was not solely an economic factor, as many families in the lower-income groups were well fed, whereas many in the higher-income groups showed malnutrition.

At the meeting of the School Health Association stress was laid on improving the quality of the athletic experience given in schools. Athletics should be regarded not only as a means to physical development, but as an important factor in total development. Too much attention was being paid to competitive inter-school games.

Social Problems

Dr. MAURICE WILLIAMS, medical officer of health for Southampton, read a paper on the rehabilitation of "problem families." He quoted the Southampton incidence as being 3.6 per thousand families. He advocated the appointment of area officers for early ascertainment of families showing evidence of going downhill, so that remedial measures could be introduced while rehabilitation might still be possible. The rehousing of some families, combined with help towards furniture and household equipment, often encouraged them to improve their standard of living.

Dr. M. G. CANDAU, Director-General of the World Health Organization, said that W.H.O. would have to turn down requests for medical assistance next year to the tune of two million dollars. The work of W.H.O. in fighting disease in all parts of the world was being hampered by a small budget. Although it boasted a membership of 84 countries, W.H.O. operated on under ten million dollars a year, of which the United States subscribed one-third.

The final session of the meeting was devoted to an address by the retiring president, Dr. HUGH LEAVELL, of Harvard University, his theme being the need to study the best use of the community's total health resources.

At the conclusion of the session the president conferred honorary fellowships on Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Minister of Health for India; Dr. Andrew Topping, Dean of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; and Dr. H. C. Maurice Williams, of Southampton, chairman of the Royal Sanitary Institute.

The Birmingham City analyst, Mr. H. H. Bagnall, draws attention in his recent annual report to the gradual debasement of certain terms which at one time had a specific meaning in relation to food, but which are gradually coming to be associated with foodstuffs bearing less and less resemblance, and inevitably inferior, to those originally described by the words. Mr. Bagnall quotes two or three instances from recent reports: for example, methyl cellulose, a purely artificial product sold as meringue powder; "selected" cheese consisting of skimmed soft cheese; rissoles sold as beef cutlets; and chicken noodle soup containing 2% chicken fat and no chicken meat. Before the war "cream" was expected to contain about 50% fat; poorer-quality articles were sold by such names as breakfast cream or coffee cream, but even so might contain as much as 25% fat. "But in the Food Standards (Cream) Order the word 'cream' is associated with coffee, single, pouring, or fruit cream, and denotes an article containing possibly only 18% fat. In these progressive days it is necessary to ask for 'double' cream in order to be sure of getting the old-fashioned 'cream' containing 50% fat."