

cal devices. They can, however, learn to "hear" what a speaker says by casually placing a hand almost anywhere against the speaker's cheek or on his head.

Strenuous efforts of educators to salvage what precious hearing the hard-of-hearing child may have was another topic of the conference. It is now realized that many a child who seems totally deaf, actually has a good deal of hearing which, if not neglected, can be trained and improved.

Educators tell of one child who was in a school three months before any one realized she could hear anything. She was considered a deaf mute. She knew written language and read lip motions of speakers. But speech was as foreign to her as Turkish might sound to the average American. Then, in less than four months this supposedly deaf child was taught to hear and understand 300 words.

*Science News Letter, July 9, 1938*

BIOLOGY—PHYSIOLOGY

## Eugenics Program Declared Impracticable at Present

### Dr. Lillie Urges Institutes for Further Study Of Human Genetics; Vitamin E Cures Sterility

**E**UGENICS is not a practicable program at present, both because we do not yet know enough about human heredity and because human social organizations are not adapted for the carrying out of such a program.

So declared Dr. Frank R. Lillie, president of the National Academy of Sciences, before the Ottawa meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

"Biological opinion is divided," Dr. Lillie said, "because our knowledge of human heredity is quite rudimentary as compared, for instance, with our knowledge of heredity in fruit flies or guinea pigs. Even if we felt sure that our knowledge of the principles of heredity in lower animals is theoretically fully applicable to mankind, we would not know how to apply it eugenically except in most general terms, for there are no pure lines in human inheritance for one thing, and for another, we have no animal analogies to the human qualities of character that we most need in the social process.

"Biological opinion is divided even on the subject of negative eugenics, the elimination of the unfit, not so much on the general desirability of the principle as on the definition of unfit, the determination of standards and the methods to be employed," Dr. Lillie continued. "Sociological and political opinion is also divided sharply, on the question of the trends of existing social, economic and political selective processes

as they affect population, and the desirability of applying such a sharp instrument as radical eugenics to society before the possibilities of social amelioration in other ways are more fully explored. Under these conditions we should have institutes specially devoted to human genetics for the sake of the medical as well as of the social problems involved.

"One sometimes feels tempted to despair of the social coordination of scientific knowledge for the increase of the well being and happiness of mankind. But faith in the progressive evolution of mankind is stronger, in the scientific world at least.

"I have the conviction that the ethical principles of Christianity are widespread among the masses of mankind, and that they will prevail. But the processes of evolution are slow, and we may have to wait a long time."

#### New Hormone Substance.

A new hormone substance of the pituitary gland, often called "the gland in the driver's seat," was presented to the scientific world by Drs. A. H. Neufeld and J. B. Collip of McGill University's Department of Biochemistry, Montreal.

It has "ketogenic and anti-insulin properties" which means that it forms ketone in the body and that it opposes the action of insulin so useful in treating diabetes. Dr. Collip was one of the Canadian team of research workers who developed insulin.

The new substance or substances have their origin in the "pars intermedia" or the portion of the gland between the anterior and posterior parts, Drs. Neufeld and Collip suggest. Thus there are added to the previously known products of this tiny gland of the head a new material from its middle portions with new and perhaps important functions in the body's health and illness.

The Montreal scientists would not speculate on the physiological significance of their findings although they said they were tempted to do so. They feel that it is judicious to await further developments before doing this.

The known effects of anterior lobe extracts upon growth, the thyroid glands, the male sex glands and the adrenals were differentiated from the newly discovered fraction.

#### Cures Sterility

Vitamin E seems to be a factor in allowing some women to bear children who otherwise can not become mothers, data presented by Dr. E. M. Watson of the University of Western Ontario Medical School indicated.

Reviewing research on the anti-sterility vitamin, he told how clinical use of wheat germ oil prevented in many cases habitual abortion in women. Experiments suggest also that it activates the anterior lobe of the important pituitary gland. He warned that one portion of ether-extracted wheat germ oil may produce cancer.

*Science News Letter, July 9, 1938*

MEDICINE

### Seek to Prevent Deaths From Epidemic Diarrhea

**M**EASURES to prevent death of new-born infants in hospitals, from epidemic diarrhea and other infections, were described by Dr. Samuel Frant of New York City's Department of Health, speaking at the annual conference of health officers and public health nurses of the state. Dr. Frant said that epidemic diarrhea of the new-born is a highly communicable infectious disease, the cause of which is still unknown.

In 27 outbreaks of this epidemic disease in three and one-half years, he found that out of 5,082 infants exposed to the disease, 750 took it and 356 died.

Dr. Frant said that New York City has adopted a series of measures to save its babies from this hazard:

1. Hospitals are required to report any case of diarrhea in an infant less