PUBLIC HEALTH

New World Health Plan

Improving health in every part of the world and controlling the spread of disease at its source will be aims of the UNO Health Organization.

➤ THE NEW IDEA in preventing the international spread of disease is to control it at its source. It got its first hearing at the conference on June 19 to form the UNO Health Organization.

Strengthening health services in every nation is on the program so that, for example, the health department of Nigeria could protect its own people and world travelers against yellow fever as effectively as New York City protects its millions of residents and visitors from typhoid fever.

In the past when nations took joint measures for health protection, the emphasis was on checking the importation of disease. Regulations, which became treaties between nations, were drawn up to keep diseases such as smallpox, cholera, plague and yellow fever from being imported into nations free of these health menaces.

Quarantine today is outmoded. Jet plane travellers of the future will balk at spending as much as 40 minutes in quarantine, much less the traditional 40 days or the two weeks that was customary even in fairly recent times.

Also outmoded, it seems to health authorities, is the necessity for having legislative bodies, such as the U. S. Senate, ratify vaccines against yellow fever and typhus fever. Yet that, in effect, was necessary when this and other nations signed the International Sanitary Convention for 1944 which provides for isolation of persons traveling by air who do not hold valid anti-yellow fever vaccination certificates from yellow fever regions.

Contagious diseases that might spread from one nation to another are not the only health problems that have international effects. Scientists and thousands of lay persons have learned in recent years that good health depends on good feeding as well as on germ fighting. People who are not adequately nourished are likely to be irritable and anxious or fearful. Sick minds in one part of the world can affect all the rest of us just as much as uncontrolled yellow fever in one part of the world can affect the rest of us.

Such effects cannot be kept from spreading by quarantine methods. Like germ-caused plagues, these must be controlled at the source. Strengthening of health and medical services is seen as one important method of stopping the spread of sick ideas by removing the ill health that may cause them.

To put the new medical and health knowledge into practice on a world-wide scale, UNO plans a new International Health Organization. A conference to work out the details started on June 19.

The new emphasis on improving health in every part of the world will not mean abandoning older international health activities. Collecting and disseminating information on foci of epidemic diseases, once a function of the Office International d'Hygiene Publique at Paris and more recently of UNRRA, will probably be taken over by the new International Health Organization and may be the first of its activities to be started.

Sanitary Convention measures for stopping the spread of contagious diseases between nations, advisory and scientific activities of the Health Section of the League of Nations, and perhaps the cooperative international health activities of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau may all become functions of the new organization.

Science News Letter, June 22, 1946

CHEMISTRY

Chemical Kills Insect Larvae But Not Fish

➤ POSSIBILITY of killing mosquito larvae, or "wigglers" without damaging fish and frogs, a risk that is run when DDT is used, is held out as a result of experiments by Dr. E. D. Goldsmith and Prof. M. H. Harnley of New York University. Working with thiourea, a chemical widely used in industry, they discovered it to be a good insecticide, though its effectiveness differed even among varieties or strains within the same insect species.

They found, too, that thiourea will kill the larvae of insects as well as adults.

Science News Letter, June 22, 1946

METALLURGY

Germany's Progress in Use of Magnesium Alloys

➤ WHILE AMERICAN engineers were quite familiar with German progress in the use of magnesium up until the start of the European war, important wartime progress was closely guarded, but is now known as a result of American investigations on the ground.

A report by the Office of the Publication Board of the Department of Commerce includes valuable data on German magnesium alloys, their uses and methods of fabrication. American manufacturers will find them useful. Germany developed magnesium alloys, it is said, earlier than America because of a shortage of raw materials from which to obtain aluminum.

Among novel developments in the German industry was the use of anhydrous ferric chloride to refine the grain of magnesium alloys containing aluminum. This chemical, in powdered form, was packaged in moistureproof paper, with just enough in each package to treat one batch of metal. The powder was lowered into the metal in a cylindrical steel basket at the end of a long steel sweep. Workers were protected by steel shields. No accidents or explosions were reported, the American investigators state.

In addition to processes well-known in America, the Germans developed a water dip process for making ingots. This employed a hot, thin-wall mold. After removal from the mold, each ingot was sliced for fracture examination and scalped all over. German authorities claim this process produces better uniformity of composition, less waste and consistent quality. Its principal disadvantage is its higher cost.

Among other matters covered in the report, which was made by R. T. Wood, investigator for the Technical Industrial Intelligence branch of the Commerce Department, is a 30,000-ton forging press for magnesium forgings, said to be the largest and most powerful in the world. The press was equipped with eight supporting columns and stood 85 feet above the floor. Its last war job was forging aluminum wing spar caps, 20 to 35 feet long, for aircraft.

Science News Letter, June 22, 1946

In early American days, ***housewives*** dyed cloth a dark red with the liquid of the common beet, boiled until the beets lost their color.