

Educational Meet Urged

► BEFORE THE UNITED STATES embarks upon any new large-scale aid programs, it should sponsor a world-wide conference to explore the scientific and educational needs of underdeveloped countries.

This was proposed in Los Angeles by Dr. Joseph Kaplan, professor of physics at the University of California at Los Angeles and chairman of the U.S. Committee for the International Geophysical Year.

He said that such a conference, at which African, Asian and Latin American scientists and engineers could present their special problems, would make American aid more effective and eliminate wasted effort.

Dr. Kaplan recently returned from the first international conference of this type, held at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel.

Russia will probably call a similar conference in the near future, he predicted.

On the basis of discussions at the Weizmann Institute conference, which brought together representatives from 40 countries,

Dr. Kaplan urges that American efforts be guided along the following lines.

1. Instead of sending high-powered experts to solve particular scientific or technological problems, the United States should let new countries develop their own experts by encouraging a sound educational system, from elementary school on up.

2. If technical experts are needed, they should come preferably from small advanced countries like Israel or Denmark, whose problems are similar to those of the newer nations, and whose motives are less likely to be suspect than those of Russia or the United States. However, in some areas, such as the use of visual teaching aids, only the larger countries will be able to supply the necessary know-how.

3. The type of conference proposed by Dr. Kaplan should be held regularly in different countries, sponsored by universities or scientific associations, rather than government agencies.

• Science News Letter, 78:331 November 19, 1960

MEDICINE

FDA Gets Bill of Health

► TOP SCIENTISTS have given the Food and Drug Administration a clean bill of health on the "scientific soundness" of its decisions regarding the certification of new drugs, including antibiotics, in recent years.

Secretary Arthur S. Flemming of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare made public the scientific findings of the committee of eight, non-governmental scientists appointed by Dr. Detlev Bronk, president of the National Academy of Sciences.

The group was asked to review the decisions on drugs made by Dr. Henry Welch, recently resigned chief of FDA's antibiotics division. His resignation followed Congressional investigation of his income from writings and activities for drug companies.

Although the group approved the decisions, it called attention to "certain deficiencies in the quality and quantity of the data upon which they were based."

More than half the applications made to the FDA for drug certification fail to supply the required data, FDA Commissioner George P. Larrick admitted. FDA policy is to return them to the manufacturer with a request for more complete data. Both large and small drug manufacturers have complained about this procedure.

"They think we're too strict," he said. "But if we err, we err on the side of safety." He said many drug manufacturers withdrew their applications rather than meet the data requirements asked by the FDA.

Secretary Flemming deplored the resistance on the part of some drug manufacturers to invest in research necessary to supply data required by FDA standards.

"We think the additional investment required is a small cost, indeed, to assure the safety of their product," he said.

The Secretary labeled the report of the scientists "definitely a vote of confidence"

in the persons working in the two units of the FDA dealing with the certification of new drugs and antibiotics. He refused to say whether he believed the report vindicated Dr. Welch.

He did not interpret as "implied criticism" the scientists' recommendation that staff members "should be supported to the utmost in their efforts to obtain submission of truly dependable scientific information on the efficacy and safety of the products." Staff members were so supported, Secretary Flemming said.

He conceded, however, that certain weaknesses have hampered the FDA in its task of protecting public health, as the scientists charged.

Both the Secretary and the scientists agree that a major weakness is the absence of statutory authority to require proof of the efficacy, as well as the safety, of all new drugs.

The scientists based their findings and recommendations on a review of only 29 of the thousands of applications processed by the FDA on drugs. The reviewed applications included three preparations of certifiable antibiotics, 14 of antibiotics classed as new drugs, and 12 of other new drugs. Those selected were only a fraction of the applications requested by the scientists and given them for review.

Secretary Flemming also announced that individual states already have notified Federal authorities of their plans to apply for aid under the new program passed during the last session of Congress of Federal-state aid for the medical care of the aged not receiving old-age assistance. He urged those states which have not already done so to take immediate action to implement the Federal statute and get benefits for their aged.

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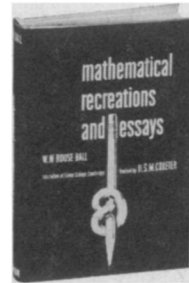
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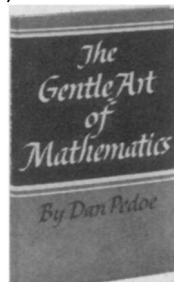
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