

PUBLIC HEALTH

Conference Recommends \$1,800,000 Anti-Plague Fund

Federal Health Service to Finance One-Half; Surgeon General Warns of Danger of U. S. Quarantine

A \$1,800,000 anti-plague campaign, one-half to be financed by federal funds and the other half by states, cities and counties, was recommended by the Plague Control Conference called in Salt Lake City by Surgeon General Thomas Parran, U. S. Public Health Service.

All state health officers of the Pacific and Mountain states and North Dakota and representatives of the Public Health Service attended the conference.

Deaths of two boys from plague this summer, increase in plague among wild rodents and the eastward spread of the infection in these animals prompted calling of the conference.

Surgeon General Parran emphasized the potential danger to citizens of the communities and to soldiers in concentrations and maneuvers in 13 states in which wild rodents or rats are now infected with plague and the possible spread of the infection to midwestern states, noting the reappearance of infection in rats in the San Francisco Bay area and its new appearance in squirrels of Colorado and North Dakota.

The persistence and spread of the disease in spite of the present efforts of the Public Health Service may also, he said, create an increased burden to our foreign commerce through quarantine measures which may be imposed against us under provisions of international sanitary treaties to which the United States is signatory.

The conference recommended expenditure of a minimum of \$1,800,000 to:

1. Expand the public health service and state surveys to determine the location of infected rodents;
2. Conduct an educational program among people as to the nature and dangers of the disease;
3. Institute and conduct organized extermination of rats, execute ratproofing measures and control the disposal of garbage which serves as food for rats in cities, villages and about military establishments;
4. Destroy wild rodents in areas in which infection is found;
5. Establish zones free of wild rodents about cities, villages and areas of military

activities to prevent possible spread of the infection through them to rats.

The control of rodents is to be carried out with the technical assistance of the Public Health Service mobile laboratory units, said Dr. N. E. Wayson, director of the U. S. Public Health Service Plague Laboratory at San Francisco. These laboratories-on-wheels will engage in collection of rodents, dry hunting and trapping and examination for infection followed by poisoning and gassing in burrows of remaining animals.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Public Health Prevention Fights Against Plague

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PUBLIC HEALTH prevention, science and sanitation permit the people of the western states to live safely with plague.

Since the first human epidemic in the United States was recorded in 1900, plague has been found in rats and wild rodents in 10 western states, yet only rare scattered human cases now occur. Plague is primarily a disease of rodents. The common mode of transmission is via the bite of a bloodsucking insect, usually the flea.

Effective public health measures include traveling laboratories, rodent suppression, rodent proofing of buildings and public education concerning the danger of handling wild rodents.

Trucks equipped as field laboratories are the reconnaissance forces in the battle against plague. Operated by the U. S. Public Health Service, California and several other states, their purpose is to find rodent infection.

Rodents are killed, combed for fleas and dissected by the field crews. Animals which appear suspicious, and fleas, are sent to a central laboratory. If plague is found, rodents are eradicated in the lo-

● RADIO

Thursday, September 13, 2:45 p.m., EST

On "Adventures in Science", with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over Columbia Broadcasting System.

Prof. Thorfin Hogness, of the University of Chicago, will give a roundup of the Symposium on Vitamins, one of a series of scientific symposia being held there as part of the celebration of the University's fiftieth anniversary.

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cality, a preventive measure which must be repeated each year, since new arrivals may become infected by fleas which remain in the burrows. Besides rats, plague has been found in squirrels, chipmunks, gophers, prairie dogs, field mice and rabbits.

Center of research is in the San Francisco bay region in the laboratories of the U. S. Public Health Service, University of California's Hooper Foundation and the California Department of Public Health. An immune serum prepared from horses is available for treating the rare human cases. Laboratory experiments with mice indicate that sulfathiazole may be useful.

Although man has learned to live in comparative safety with a once dreaded disease, preventive measures must continue unabated. For so long as plague smolders in the rodent population, there is the potential danger that insects will carry the disease to man.

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BOTANY

German Shrub May Yield Gutta-Percha

Possible evidence of German anxiety over supplies of overseas origin is given in a recommendation to try a native European shrub, known as the warty spindle-tree, as a source of gutta-percha, rubber-like gum used in dental work. Prof. Constantin von Regel, who makes the suggestion in an issue of *Die Umschau* just received, states that the plant has been under investigation for similar purposes in the USSR.

The European species of spindle-tree are close botanical relatives of the American shrub known as burning-bush or waahoo, fairly common in woodlands in the eastern half of the United States. Although sometimes planted as an ornamental, it has never been regarded in this country as having any particular economic value.

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