

Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting of the Puerto Rico Public Health Association

THE SECOND ANNUAL MEETING of the Puerto Rico Public Health Association was held at San Juan on January 30 and 31, 1943. The Association was privileged in having as guests: Dr. Gustavo Pittaluga, Professor-in-exile of the Central University of Madrid and now at the University of Havana, Dr. Lydia F. Roberts, Chairman of the Department of Home Economics of the University of Chicago, and Mr. F. P. Bartlett, of the National Resources Planning Board.

The first day was given over to general scientific meetings, the second to group meetings. An inaugural public session was held on the evening of the thirtieth. Most of the papers read at the scientific meetings appear in this issue of *The Puerto Rico Journal of Public Health and Tropical Medicine*, while others will be published in a special number of *The Bulletin of the Puerto Rico Medical Association*.

A paper that aroused a great deal of discussion was read by Mr. Bartlett. Puerto Rico's social and economic problems have been studied time and again, overpopulation and lack of resources being blamed over and over for the low economic status and for most of the socio-economic problems of the Island. In "Population and Resources" Mr. Bartlett presented a rather complete analysis of the situation, making numerous specific suggestions on possible solutions to these problems that included suggestions as to what could be done in the immediate future as well as to what measures could be considered on a long-term basis.

Among those papers that commanded special interest were Dr. Lydia Roberts' "Nutrition in a Health Program" and Dr. Ramón M. Suárez' "Preliminary Report on Nutritional Studies in Puerto Rico." It is a well-known fact that the Island is suffering a tremendous nutritional crisis; it is also well known that the diet of a population suffers under the stress of war conditions. It was therefore of interest to learn from an expert in the field, such as Dr. Roberts, how a public health department could best direct its activities so as to include nutritional problems as a part of its regular public health program, and to hear about those studies in nutrition now under way, which will help to clarify local conditions by showing how to attack the problem more effectively.

Dr. Gustavo Pittaluga's conference on "The Epidemiology of

War" was most instructive. Dr. Pittaluga's experiences during World War I and the Spanish Civil War and his investigations in the war-torn countries of Europe were the main topics of his lecture.

At the inaugural session, Governor Rexford G. Tugwell followed the short speech of greeting with which the new President of the Association, Dr. P. Morales Otero, opened the proceedings. As at the First Annual Meeting, Governor Tugwell's words were full of stimulating advice.

In his presidential address, Dr. E. Garrido Morales described public health problems of Puerto Rico and the war's effect upon them. He summarized the activities of the Insular Health Department during the last few years, stressing those which had been influenced by the present emergency. Dr. Joseph H. Bolten, District Director of the United States Public Health Service, and Dr. A. Fernós Isern, Commissioner of Health, also addressed the gathering. Mr. Jaime Benítez, Rector of the University of Puerto Rico, delivered the closing address, wherein he outlined the role that the University must play in meeting the demands of the Island for trained personnel for medical and public health work.

Although different topics were taken up by the various groups, all gave considerable thought to the training of public health personnel. It was the consensus of opinion that such training must continue, since the need for it was greater during the present period of emergency than in normal times. The Group of Public Health Nurses summarized its discussion on training in the following resolution:

1. THAT the courses offered by the Department of Public Health of the School of Tropical Medicine, leading to the Certificate in Public Health Nursing, be continued;
2. THAT nursing supervisors take a more active part in the field training of public health nurses;
3. THAT public health nurses be encouraged to take additional public health training in continental schools, their expenses, however, to be financed by the individual nurses themselves.

The Social Workers Group approved the following resolution dealing with public health and social assistance:

Because prevailing economic and social conditions in Puerto Rico affect so adversely programs of public health in the Island,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Puerto Rico Public Health Association shall

give its support to all measures conducive to the improvement of the social and economic life of the Island;

THAT a social security program, which will provide social insurance and public assistance for the population shall, therefore, receive the Association's fullest endorsement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT since the Association believes that the effectiveness of social assistance depends to a large extent on the efficiency of the personnel administering these programs, it shall, therefore, support the development of adequate professional training for the individuals performing these services.

The Group of Sanitary Engineers and Sanitarians discussed the following topics: (a) operation of filtration plants; (b) operation of chlorination plants; (c) disposal of excess molasses that is accumulating in sugar factories and cannot be exported; (d) disposal of other industrial residues; (e) water supply problems in rural areas. The discussions at the Health Officers' Round Table dealt principally with the most common administrative problems met with at Public Health Units, which usually arise from a lack of adequately trained personnel.

The Group of Laboratory Workers discussed methods for the evaluation of laboratory techniques.

On the whole, all groups laid special emphasis on the great need for right planning of public health activities and for training the personnel that will assure the proper fulfillment of such plans.

A short executive session was held after the group meetings. The new President of the Association, Dr. P. Morales Otero, was inducted. The following officers were elected:

President-elect: Dr. O. Costa Mandry
 Vice-President: Dr. E. Martínez Rivera
 Secretary: Dr. Guillermo Arbona
 Treasurer: Miss Carmen Guzmán

Three new members of the Board of Directors were also elected: Dr. Ramón Fernández Marchante, Miss Isolina Ramis, Mrs. Mary P. Rahn.

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