

MILBANK MEMORIAL FUND

QUARTERLY BULLETIN

NEW YORK HEALTH DEMONSTRATIONS

The State Charities Aid Association (New York) is the organizing and supervisory agency for the Cattaraugus County (rural) and Syracuse (urban) health demonstrations. Operating responsibilities in the demonstration districts are in the hands of local health and educational authorities and of voluntary health and welfare agencies



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THE third annual meeting of the Advisory Council of the Milbank Memorial Fund followed within a week the organization on November 14, 1924, of a Community Health Council in the City of New York, through which public and private agencies will co-operate in conducting the metropolitan health demonstration in the Bellevue-Yorkville district of the Borough of Manhattan. This will supplement the similar urban and rural projects already under way in New York State. Ex-Senator Elihu Root, on behalf of the Fund's Board of Directors, welcomed the members of the Advisory Council, a majority of whom were present. William H. Welch, Dean of the School of Hygiene of Johns Hopkins University and Chairman of the Council, presided over the meeting, which was held on November twentieth.

The session was opened with a silent toast to the memory of the founder of the Fund, Elizabeth Milbank Anderson, and to the recently deceased members of the Advisory Council, Dr. John L. Heffron, Dr. L. Emmett Holt, and Dr. T. Mitchell Prudden. The toast was proposed by Mr. Root, who was the first speaker.

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“The extreme difficulty of getting truth into the minds of men stands in the way of much public enterprise,” said Mr. Root. “I think the power of coal saved in our locomotives is a little less than 5 per cent and the loss 95 per cent,” he continued. “If there is that loss in the power of coal in transportation, you may multiply it by one hundred in order to obtain an idea of the loss of all the vast multitude of words that are poured out upon the people of America, day by day and night by night, in newspapers, and magazines, and books, and lectures, and class-rooms, and public meetings—words upon words in fogs. There is not one-tenth of one one-hundredth of one per cent of them which makes a lodgment and amounts to anything in the minds to which they are addressed. Only the people read things who don’t need to read them. The people who ought to be affected by a speech are bored by it. We keep saying over and over again to each other the things that we agree upon, but we seldom get at the people who don’t agree with us.

“Now, when it comes to certain humanitarian efforts, it is almost impossible to do anything of any value from without—by external forces—without having the individual energized, made sympathetic, made an assistant in the effort. The great question with all people who want to improve the condition of mankind is, how to get mankind to try to improve itself. In the attempt to teach people how to avoid the scourge of disease, to teach them to stop it when it begins, to cure it, to make it a continually dwindling and gradually disappearing evil, we have been led by wise advice to undertake something besides mere words—*demonstration.*”

A total of sixteen speakers took part in the discussion of subjects introduced at the meeting.* Dr. Welch, Dr. William H. Park, Dr. W. S. Rankin and Dr. Frankwood E. Williams discussed “The Social Implications of a Longer Life.”

*A more complete account of the Advisory Council meeting will be given in the Milbank Memorial Fund Annual Report, 1924.

Homer Folks, Miss Elizabeth G. Fox, Dr. Matthias Nicoll, Jr., and Dr. C.-E. A. Winslow discussed the question "How Much Will People Pay for Health?"

In the absence of Dr. Frank J. Monaghan, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Health, a statement about the metropolitan demonstration as prepared by him, was read by Dr. S. W. Wynne, Acting Director of the Bureau of Hospitals of the Health Department, who also participated in the discussion.

A brief report of recent progress in the Syracuse demonstration was made by Dr. Thomas P. Farmer, Commissioner, and by Dr. George C. Ruhland, Deputy Commissioner, of the Department of Health of that city. A similar survey of current work in the Cattaraugus County demonstration was presented by Dr. Leverett D. Bristol, County Health Officer, and John Walrath, President of the Cattaraugus County Board of Health.

Pointing out that it is absolutely impossible to lengthen life, to reduce mortality by the application of medical knowledge to human welfare, without at the same time improving the vitality and physical condition of life, Dr. Livingston Farrand, in closing the discussion, stressed the importance of the demonstration method in effecting this result. "I, for one, am thoroughly optimistic, not only as to the specific results to be obtained in the demonstration areas, but as to the receptivity of the American people to the facts once they are demonstrated," he said.

The organization of the Community Health Council to conduct the metropolitan demonstration in New York City was the outcome of resolutions adopted by the Advisory Council on November 15, 1923. Some 100 representatives from more than sixty voluntary and official organizations attended the meeting, over which Commissioner Monaghan presided.

Representing the Board of Directors of the Milbank Memorial Fund, Albert G. Milbank, explained the aims of that body in inaugurating and granting funds in aid of the health demonstrations, and set forth the manner in which the Fund was preparing to co-operate in the proposed metropolitan demonstration. In voicing the appreciation of the City of New York and of the Department of Health, Commissioner Monaghan emphasized the value of the opportunity presented by the demonstration for effective and concerted action by public and private agencies engaged in community health work.

Dr. Monaghan was elected Chairman of the newly organized Council. Dr. John J. McGrath was made First Vice-Chairman; Miss Lillian D. Wald, Second Vice-Chairman; and Miss Alta Elizabeth Dines, Secretary. Dr. James Alexander Miller was appointed Chairman of the Executive Committee, which consists of representatives of various organizations in the Bellevue-Yorkville district.

At a recent meeting of the Technical Board, the resignation of Dr. Bernard L. Wyatt, its Secretary, was accepted with regret. Dr. Wyatt, who is a specialist on tuberculosis, will practice medicine in Tucson, Arizona.

Otto R. Eichel, M. D., Director of the Division of Vital Statistics of the New York State Department of Health, died on December 24, 1924, at Geneva, Switzerland. As a member of the Statistical Advisory Committee of the Milbank Fund, Dr. Eichel rendered valuable assistance in outlining the statistical services of the health demonstrations. At the time of his death, he was on a year's leave of absence from the State Health Department, serving as temporary head of the Division of Vital Statistics of the Health Section of the League of Nations.