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TWO YEARS *of* PUBLIC HEALTH DEMONSTRATION

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IN the light of two years' experience in their organization and development, it was possible at a recent meeting of its Technical Board to re-examine the aims and purposes of the three health demonstrations which are at present enlisting the chief interest and support of the Milbank Memorial Fund. Work done in the rural health demonstration in Cattaraugus County and in the urban health demonstration in Syracuse, was reviewed, and an attempt was made to assess the relative importance of the various health activities included in the programs being carried out in these communities. The discussion included an inquiry into the social significance of the major health problems presented in these localities and in the Bellevue-Yorkville district of New York City, as a means of determining anew the degree of emphasis which should be placed on the various projects included in the health demonstration programs. Two days, February twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth, were given over to the discussions.

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Although the New York Health Demonstrations are concerned with measures which have been for the most part settled by experiment, the procedure of development has been and will continue to be essentially experimental, with all that implies. It is believed that the health demonstration districts provide fertile fields for the discovery of additional information about disease prevention and control and about health administration in general, and that they should throw new light upon the social factors involved in such community undertakings as well as upon the reaction of community groups to the measures introduced and their willingness to support them. The health demonstrations deal with large population groups, varied in character, living under different environmental conditions. They are concerned with all age groups. There is general participation, every organization, both public and private, and every individual in the demonstration units being included. There is no sharp time limit on the undertakings. They deal with health, not in its narrowest sense, but rather in the broader sense of its social implications. Always pertinent, therefore, is a critical review, such as that made at the recent Technical Board meeting, of the general health demonstrations program, its aims, methods and procedures.

In addition to making an appraisal of the available health and social statistical data, the Technical Board examined the types of organization and health services which had been set up and developed in Cattaraugus County and in Syracuse; the co-ordination which has been effected between existing public and private health agencies; and the measure of success which has been attained in perfecting co-operation between the voluntary health agencies, the private organizations and the public health officials. The Board reviewed the qualifications of the directing personnel and attempted to measure the

success they had had in adjusting themselves to the local situations which they had found and to the changes which had arisen. Through a consideration of the sums it was found necessary to include in the budgets, the Board also attempted to determine the amount and importance of the local community participation in the health demonstrations, as measured by their assumption of the costs of the new elements in their community health program.

All of the work of the rural health demonstration in Cattaraugus County, it was reported, has been carried on under the appropriate local authorities and agencies there. The County Board of Health, with an adequately equipped personnel, is operating in an efficient manner. Village and town health officers have participated in the demonstration, and there has been no opposition to the project by either lay or medical groups. The press has been generally favorable to the work. Both public appropriations and volunteer contributions to public health work in the County have greatly increased since the beginning of the demonstration there.

The general death rate and the infant mortality rate were shown to have decreased in the County in 1924, as compared with the average for the previous five years, and with those of the control counties as a whole—Jefferson, Steuben and Washington, all in New York State. The death rate from tuberculosis also shows a slight decrease. For the length of time the rural health demonstration has been under way, its work in the prevention and control of tuberculosis, measured by the number of cases under supervision, the percentage of incipient cases reported, and the increase in the numbers under sanatorium or home care, compares favorably with the results achieved in the Framingham project, which specialized in this disease.

Progress in the urban health demonstration in Syracuse,

New York, has been made wholly through the development of the work of the Department of Health there, together with that of the Bureau of Health Supervision, which is under the supervision of the local Board of Education, and that of existing voluntary agencies, including the Onondaga Health Association. Effort has been directed toward securing effective administrative organization and control of important and developing health services in the City.

Various bureaus of the Health Department have been strengthened, particularly those in charge of tuberculosis work, communicable diseases, medical work in parochial schools and child hygiene. An effective Bureau of Public Health Education has been established, and the Bureau of Records and Reports has been made more potent.

As in Cattaraugus County, public appropriations for health work in Syracuse have materially increased since the demonstration started. There is evidence of full understanding and complete appreciation by the fiscal authorities of the value of the demonstration activities, their benefits to the people of the City, and the propriety with which many of them could become municipal charges.

The general death rate, infant death rate, tuberculosis death rate, and other rates, show a very favorable comparison with the previous five years, and while, as yet, the demonstration activities have not been in operation long enough to trace this decrease to the demonstration, it is probable that in some measure, the improved position of Syracuse in relation to the control cities (Albany, Troy, Utica, Rochester and Yonkers) of the State in this respect is due to the health campaign.

In both the Cattaraugus County and Syracuse projects, there has been gratifying co-operation and generous participation by the New York State Department of Health, the

State Mental Deficiency Commission, and by the State Department of Education. Although at first unofficially organized, the rural school health work in Cattaraugus County has already led to legislation which not only makes official the school hygiene program carried out there, but which makes permissive the establishment of county school hygiene districts throughout New York State.

While the demonstration in the Bellevue-Yorkville district of New York City is still in its initial stages, it is reported that the active co-operation of both public health and voluntary health organizations has been secured and the foundations laid for the successful operation of the proposed program for this demonstration.

The Cattaraugus County Board of Supervisors recently appropriated \$10,000 for the construction of an addition to the County tuberculosis sanatorium. The present institution, which has a bed capacity for the treatment of forty patients, has recently undergone repairs and renovation.

Forty patients were admitted to the County Sanitorium during the fiscal year ending in 1923, and eighty-four during the same period in 1924—an increase of 110 per cent.

