

SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME'S COMMENTS *on*
The NEW YORK HEALTH DEMONSTRATIONS

COMMENTING specifically on the New York Health Demonstrations, Sir Arthur Newsholme said that he had been even more impressed than on his first visit "with the soundness of their general plan." That the demonstrations are carrying on experimental work in an official setting of city and county administration, and thus are helping forward the inevitable, but too slow, trend toward intimate inter-relations and partial fusion of voluntary and official activities, he regarded as their unique feature. "Although the adoption of this method almost excludes the dramatic demonstration of the good done, it is sound in conception, and is showing its value in actual experience," he continued.

The Cattaraugus County Health Demonstration

If no other results had been achieved in Cattaraugus County, beyond the firm establishment there of New York State's first county unit for public health administration, the rural health demonstration would have more than proved

its value, he asserted. "There are, however, many other gains in details of administration, and the standard of work in nearly every department has been materially elevated."

He commented at length on the public health services which had been developed in the County. Since these are summarized in the accompanying article, only brief reference is made to them here—space being devoted rather to Sir Arthur's suggestions for improving the County's public health program.

"In tuberculosis, the practical elimination of bovine tuberculosis from cattle of the County is a great feat. Excellent work is being done in regard to human tuberculosis, though the fact that new open cases of phthisis are still being belatedly found shows that certain sections of the public still do not realize the importance of early diagnosis and treatment. An intensive investigation of 500 families for tuberculosis, by all known tests, has been recommended. This would furnish epidemiological knowledge of much value, while being of equal value to the families thus intensively studied. For difficult parturient cases and for sick children among the patients who cannot pay, there is still a serious lack of available hospital beds.

"The treatment of patients for venereal diseases is still on a comparatively small scale, and cannot be regarded as satisfactory, inasmuch as in these diseases prompt and adequate treatment is a chief public health measure. This problem will need further study as to possible means for extending the present work.

"The laboratory service of the Cattaraugus County Board of Health has increased in efficiency and usefulness, and the volume of work now done by its staff on behalf of every medical practitioner in the County demonstrates its high value to the community.

“Medical inspection of school children in the County has been followed in a considerable proportion of instances by curative action. In a number of cases where families could not afford prescribed treatment, voluntary funds have made it possible to compensate physicians for operations. By the use of funds supplied by the Public Health and Tuberculosis Association, a number of children crippled after poliomyelitis have also received appropriate treatment.

“There is real need for similar provision for infants and for preschool children and for scholars throughout the County on a much larger scale than has hitherto been practicable. The three conditions which most urgently call for this aid, both for school and preschool children, are (a) tonsillar disease and adenoids; (b) defects of eyesight; and (c) dental caries, although this is not an exhaustive list.

“In my view, arrangements for the treatment of these and allied conditions are urgently needed in those instances in which reference to the family doctor (with adequate follow-up arrangements) fails to secure treatment. In such cases it is advisable that each case should be investigated as to economic resources, and then arrangements made to treat the patient gratuitously or at a reduced charge. A scale of charges for each case could be arranged with doctors willing to undertake such cases, and in this way the cooperation of the doctors may be anticipated. The public may reasonably be expected to contribute on a larger scale than at present, the funds necessary for this amelioration of conditions lowering the average health of the community.”

The Syracuse Health Demonstration

“THE first five years of the Syracuse Health Demonstration have necessarily been years of consolidation,” said Sir Arthur Newsholme. “I recall a remark I made at the time

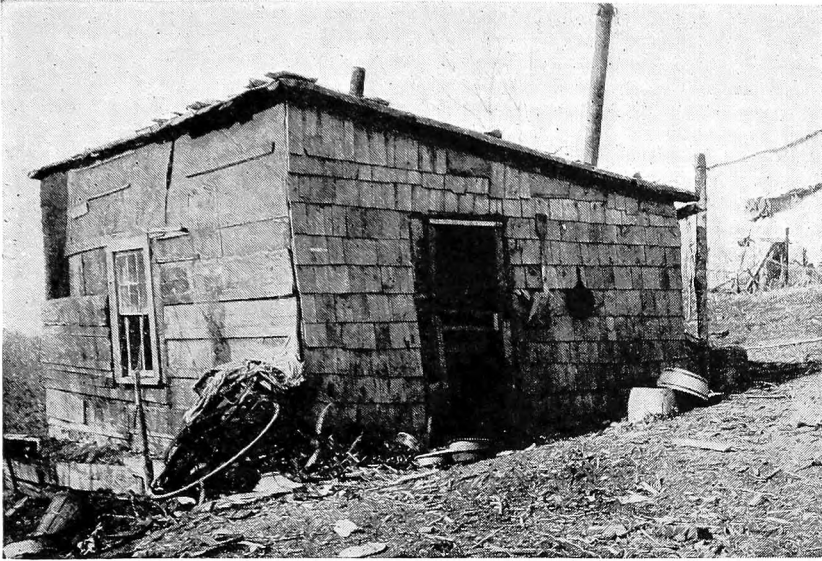
of my earlier visit, that much spade work would be needed in Syracuse before obvious quotable results were secured in its public health work—before the City could be pointed to as a model for other areas.

“In the years which have elapsed since the demonstration was inaugurated, and as a result of persistent steady work, scientifically directed, foundations have been well and soundly laid for the development in Syracuse of a public health program which pilgrims may well come from all parts of the world to observe.

“I have been greatly impressed by the advance made in Syracuse in the generalized nursing system which has superseded the old system where certain nurses did tuberculosis work and other nurses did other specialized types of nursing.

“To a considerable extent I associate the progress which has been made in tuberculosis work in Syracuse with the splendid institutional provisions which have been made there. In the usage of hospital beds for tuberculous patients, the American Public Health Association appraisal form has been greatly exceeded. The tuberculosis work being done there is perhaps the best I have known in any area in America. Workers in other areas may be referred to this City, as well as to Cattaraugus County, as places in which there has been secured a high and progressive standard of preventive work, including the curative work so necessary to prevention.

“Much valuable action has already been taken in Syracuse to knit social case work into the tuberculosis organization. It is essential that such service (given strictly on lines conducive to prevention) should be increasingly extended if the insemination of successive crops of tuberculosis to be reaped in coming years is to be diminished still more rapidly. This principle does not apply only to tuberculosis. It runs right



“Destitution is an ‘end product’ of neglected disease in 60 per cent of the cases. If sickness had been prevented, the destitution would not have followed. This points to the need of public health work which concerns itself with the prevention of the consequences of existing defects.”

through preventive medicine in its relation to poverty.”

Sir Arthur Newsholme said that he thought that “an increase in social case work would help the doctors to avoid treating patients free who do not need to be treated free. In Los Angeles County (California), where the health administration is admirable, they are building ten health centers. Two of them are already built. These centers are being used by doctors in the district for their poor patients. Social investigations are made as to whether or not a given patient should be treated free. If he cannot afford to pay, he is given excellent treatment in these health centers, sometimes by the very doctors who have referred him, and if he needs a hospital bed, it is provided. Close relationships are maintained between the health centers and the local relief and after-care agencies. Men with hernias, with impaired teeth and many other defects, who are unable to work on account

of their defects, are being put back on to their feet, economically, through the necessary surgical treatment. The doctors are thus relieved of the burden of looking after these patients personally.

“Probably at least 60 per cent of the destitution which shackles the community is due to sickness; and at Syracuse, as elsewhere, there is needed a much closer linking up of poor-law administration with public health administration. The ideal, stated in its lowest terms, is that no monetary relief shall be given out of the public pocket until there has been a medical, as well as a social, diagnosis of the applicant—until it has been determined whether the proposed monetary expenditure cannot in part, at least, be better spent in the treatment and cure of illness and the removal of conditions following its continuance, rather than be a mere non-remedial weekly dole. Active steps have already been taken locally on the initiation of Syracuse health organization to advance in the direction of this ideal.”

Sir Arthur commended the good work being done in Syracuse in prenatal and infantile welfare work and among pre-school children. He attached special importance to the beginning made in preschool work for children. Although it is at present only in its earliest stages, he believes that “when developed, it will go far toward diminishing the terrible toll of damaging and disabling physical and mental defects found by the school medical service.”

The Bellevue-Yorkville Health Demonstration

“THE experiment which is going on in the Bellevue-Yorkville district,” continued Dr. Newsholme, “is one of great public interest. It is an experiment in which not only is intensive educational work being carried out, but also in which methods are being devised and tried out, which

I believe will be extended from that demonstration to other parts of the City, though perhaps not on an equally elaborate scale.

“There is need for great extension of this method of devolution, of decentralization, for by that means it will be possible to get the spirit of local civic patriotism introduced. And in such local experiments as the one in Bellevue-Yorkville, it is practical to re-introduce the neighborhood spirit which is lacking in our big cities.

“We often hear of the good old times. I do not believe in the good old times. I believe in the good times now and in those coming along hereafter. But in one respect the times past were better than now. There was more of this social intercourse and helpfulness between neighboring families. It should be our effort to reconstruct that. And I know of nothing better than having public health centers throughout the City, around which every public health work of that quarter will be focused.

“One important part of such neighborhood growth of feeling would be that generalized nursing would be introduced. Although there is a great deal to be said in favor of special nurses for tuberculosis, and special public health nurses for other departments of public health work, much more can be said for one nurse who understands the hygienic advice needed to be given in public health work, in all its relationships, and who will make herself the friend of the mothers and children of a neighborhood.

“In New York City a condition exists which is potentially more favorable to future good administration than present conditions in London. Formerly, London had more than twenty-eight boroughs, each autonomous, completely severed. Then it was felt that there was a need of overlordship, and the County Council was instituted, which in cer-

tain respects governs public health matters for the whole of London. Certain public health matters are left to the boroughs with the consequence that all the time, there has been difficulty in deciding which should be centrally administered and which should be locally administered. Although notwithstanding points of friction and difficulty and local jealousies, the standard of administration is fairly good, but the best distribution of sanitary functions is not yet attained."

Dr. Newsholme pointed out that there is, on the other hand, one government for the whole of New York City's six or seven millions of population—a completely centralized and unified administration for the City's five boroughs. But, in New York City in the field of public health the need is for decentralization.

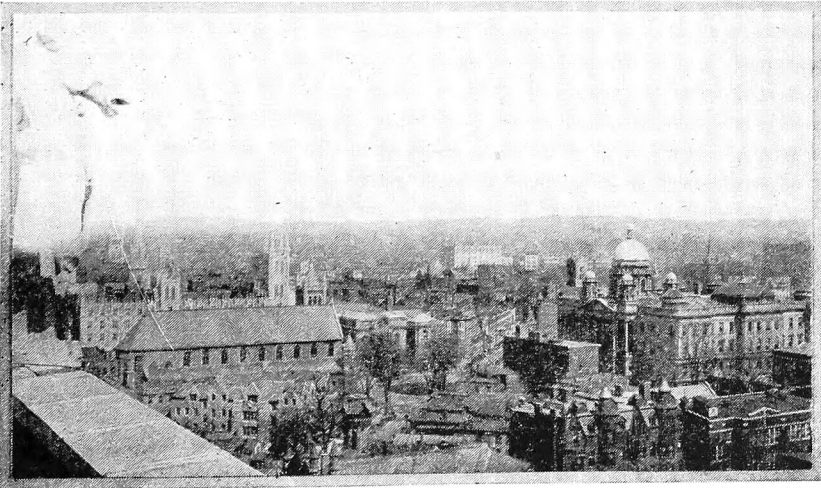
"Each of the City's five boroughs," he stated, "ought to have an assistant health commissioner closely related to the Commissioner of Health; and each of these five boroughs ought to have represented in it every one of the special departments of public health work which is embraced at headquarters, so that the five boroughs would be autonomous in detail, but subject in strategy and methods of administration to the central administration. It is only by decentralization that the Health Commissioner and his colleagues can be saved from an intolerable burden of detail which makes it impossible for them to study adequately the great problems with which they have to deal."

Sir Arthur Newsholme said he thought it very important that voluntary health work should be closely related to the City's public health program. Such relationship, he continued, is "being cultivated in the Bellevue-Yorkville Health Center, where under the same roof there are not only clinics of the Health Department for tuberculosis, for venereal diseases, and for infants, but offices for leading health and social

agencies in the district. It is of the best possible augury that these agencies can exchange notes with each other and with the official public health agency with which their work should be dovetailed. There can be no doubt at all that the best setting for all voluntary work is a municipal setting."

Conclusion

IN conclusion, Sir Arthur said that the "full value of the good already secured in the New York Health Demonstrations will not be evident until the work securing this good is continued for a longer period; and much of its value would be lost by precipitate curtailment of the work. For much of the good achieved, one must think of the beneficent influence of the local work on other communities which will never be measurable by statistical data. For this reason, as well as for other obvious reasons, I trust that the work of experimenting begun in the demonstrations—to ascertain the best methods of various branches of public health work, and to prove the value of improved work—will be continued. There is no standing still in public health, and if one is not going on, one is certain to be going back."





*C*ONCENTRATION upon the care of the mother and her child requires the giving of alert attention to nearly the whole gamut of public health measures.

—SIR ARTHUR NEWSHOLME, M.D., K.C.B.