

## SOCIAL ASPECTS\*

### PREAMBLE

For many years it has been increasingly recognized that the psychological factors involved in any disease, and especially in a chronic one, are of importance in the treatment of the patient. This is especially true with leprosy, an ailment which for centuries has been feared and abhorred.

This Committee considers it important that the Congress, while recognizing the difficulty of making detailed recommendations because of the widely divergent conditions existing in different countries, shall approve—in general terms—remedies for those factors which plan an important part in the emotional state of the leprous patient. Is it not, after all, prejudice—growing out of ignorance of the true nature of the disease on the part of the patients,

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\* The Committee on Social Aspects was composed as follows: Mr. Perry Burgess, *Chairman*, Dr. A. Salazar Leite, *Secretary*, and Drs. Luis Arguello Pitt, Harry L. Arnold, Jr., Felix Contreras, F. Hemerijckx, D. Maldonado Romero, L. Martinez Kleiser, and Etienne Montestruc, *members*.

family, friends and neighbours—which causes him to be feared and shunned, and which thus most deeply disturbs his state of mind? And this same state of mind causes him, far too often, to hide his identity behind a false name, even when his own is an honourable and respected one, and even to fear to present himself for treatment.

## REPORT

1. The Committee approves the action at the Havana Congress with regard to the words “leper” and “leprosy.” (See Addendum.)

2. The Committee recommends that the Sixth International Congress applaud and encourage efforts now being made for the rehabilitation of the patient with leprosy, and in particular the programme of education for laymen and physicians in regard to the disease.

3. The Committee regards gainful work as of primary importance in the treatment and rehabilitation of patients with leprosy. In each country, choice of occupations must be made according to local circumstances. Governments and private institutions are urged to make every effort to guarantee work to patients discharged from institutions, in compliance with local public health regulations. Vocational training should be provided for those patients needing it.

4. The Committee recommends that there be as little interference as possible with the normal lives and usual occupations of leprosy patients certified by leprologists as non-contagious, in so far as this is consistent with local public health regulations and the patients' own medical well-being.

5. The Committee recommends approval and encouragement of the provisions of governmental assistance for the support of the dependent families of patients isolated, or otherwise disabled because of leprosy.

6. The Committee approves the care of patients with disabilities or permanent deformities in special institutions, so that the atmosphere among patients who are not so disabled or deformed will not have an unfavourable influence.

7. Private institutions for social relief, and those institutions which are collaborating with the governments to prevent, cure or control leprosy, should receive as much assistance from their governments as is consistent with complete freedom of action within the framework of the public health laws of the country.

8. The Committee recommends that existing laws in all

countries be brought up to date and raised to the same level as the modern concepts that are the basis of our present prophylactic campaign.

#### ADDENDUM

With regard to paragraph 1 of the above report, the decisions of the Havana Congress on the words " leper " and " leprosy " were, briefly:

That the use of the term " leper " be abandoned in favour of " leprosy patient " (or the like); that the use of any such term, in any language, to which unpleasant associations are attached should be discouraged; but that " the term ' leprosy ' should be retained as the scientific designation for the disease."

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