

## News and Notes

### NEW WHO CAMPAIGN AGAINST SIX TROPICAL DISEASES

The WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases came under close scrutiny during a recent meeting of heads of agencies and national representatives. As a result, 6 tropical diseases were chosen as the targets for a massive international campaign directed towards their treatment and prevention, and extending over the next 10 years. The 6 diseases chosen were: malaria, schistosomiasis (bilharziasis), filariasis including onchocerciasis (river blindness), trypanosomiasis (both sleeping sickness and Chagas disease), leprosy and the different forms of leishmaniasis (kala azar, tropical ulcer).

Dr H. C. Goodman, the Director of WHO's Special Programme, said that as it was impossible to approach all the known tropical diseases, the initial attack was being focussed on 6 chronic debilitating diseases, and pointed out that the programme would be particularly concerned with attracting more scientists in fields like immunology, and cellular and molecular biologists to the study of parasites.

During the 2-day meeting it was stressed that although Africa had been chosen for the initial attempt to bring these plagues within control, the Special Programme is not simply a continental effort but a global one, since all 6 diseases also afflict huge areas elsewhere. The diseases would be studied on their own ground in the tropical countries to ensure that the remedies are tailored to the real needs and not to the supposed needs of the countries concerned. As a result, scientific training and expertise will be developed that can be used to help apply the remedies, to adapt them or to develop new ones wherever in the world these diseases are rampant.

Substantial contributions to support the multi-million dollar programme were pledged by a number of donor countries during the course of the meeting.

### COUNCIL OF WORLD ORGANIZATIONS INTERESTED IN THE HANDICAPPED

As one of the 37 member-organizations of CWOIH, the International Leprosy Association was represented by its Secretary-Treasurer (Dr S. G. Browne) at a meeting of the Council held in Geneva on September 23 and 24. The United Nations sent its representative to the meeting, as did also the World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNESCO and the International Labour Office.

The size of the problem of the handicapped in the world is indicated by the numbers—a total of 400 million, of whom perhaps 300 million are in the developing countries; of the latter, only about 1% are at present within reach of any physical and social assistance, and most of these live in the capital city or the larger towns. Leprosy is, of course, a prime example of disabling handicaps that

are compounded by high degrees of social discrimination. Emphasis was laid on the need to concentrate on the preventive measures that should take precedence over expensive schemes for rehabilitation, even in organizations whose main objects are the relief of the consequences of existing handicapping conditions. A rather disturbing report was presented that in one instance (which may or may not be representative), an excellent project for helping handicapped persons led to a greater eventual dependance on medical care and a lowered industrial productivity when the group was compared with another group in similar circumstances where rehabilitation services were not offered.

The discrimination practised against the handicapped was the subject of debate: in employment, housing, schooling and access to social services, the handicapped are often penalized. In many countries leprosy sufferers find themselves in a special category of deprivation. The Council may make official representations to the United Nations on behalf of the handicapped in the hope that their status may be recognized and raised.