

By July 22nd the delegates had adopted a constitution establishing the World Health Organization as a specialized agency operating under the Economic and Social Council. The functions and responsibilities of the health assembly, the executive board and the secretariat were defined. It was agreed that the new organization should take over the health functions of the League of Nations, the health section of UNRRA and l'Office International d'Hygiene Publique, and that negotiations should be begun with the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau.

Perhaps I should mention at this point that the World Health Organization is open to non-members of the United Nations and that the constitution was signed by ten countries not members of the United Nations as well as by the 51 countries then members of it.

These 61 states also agreed to the appointment of an interim commission of 18 members to carry on until at least 26 nations had ratified World Health Organization's constitution and thereby brought it into legal existence.

At the first session of the interim commission Canada's close link with the development of the organization was further recognized in the choice of a Canadian as executive secretary. The chairman of the interim commission is a Yugoslav, Dr. Stampar.

It so happened that Parliament was still in session, and it was possible for the World Health Organization's constitution to be submitted to it for consideration at once. Thus it came about that Canada had the further distinction of being the first nation formally to join this new international agency.

It would be tedious to detail for you all the legal points in the constitution. But let us glance for a moment at a few of the organization's functions, keeping always in mind that they are on the international level.

It is to stimulate and advance work to eradicate epidemic, endemic and other diseases. It is to promote, in co-operation with other specialized agencies where necessary, the improvement of nutrition, sanitation, housing, recreation, economic or working conditions and other aspects of environmental hygiene. It is authorized to promote and conduct research in health problems and to assist in development of an informed public opinion among all people on matters of health. Most important of all, it is to act as the directing and co-ordinating authority in international health work and thus to replace the patchwork of organizations previously in operation.

Truly a new horizon has been opened for health!

The second session of the interim commission was marked by further progress. Committees were set up to deal with a variety of health problems, specifically malaria, yellow fever, venereal disease, narcotics and quarantine regulations. An indication of the wide range of world health problems is to be found in the appointment of a group to study regulations on pilgrimages! Canada was elected to membership on three committees, chief of which is the one on administration and finance. The other two are those to study the UNRRA budget for health projects and to prepare recommendations regarding a permanent headquarters. The next session of the interim commission opens in Geneva on March 31st.

Obviously the World Health Organization cannot operate successfully in a vacuum. It is not a scientific oddity to be preserved in a jar for the curious to gaze upon. Rather, it is a living part of our social order, and its growth and development depend to no small extent on the strength given it by its member states.