

## TROPICAL MEDICAL CONGRESS

(Secretary of State George C. Marshall's Welcome Address)

ON behalf of the Government and the people of the United States, I welcome this distinguished gathering of scientists, physicians and public health officials to Washington. We are honoured to be host to your joint Congresses and the Department of State, along with other Government agencies and professional societies, is happy to sponsor your sessions.

Since your last meeting at Amsterdam in 1938, the world has passed through a terrible ordeal which threatened to cancel out the progress mankind had slowly and painfully achieved through centuries of sacrifice and toil. By a supreme effort civilization was saved and in the process new discoveries and inventions added to the store of man's accumulated knowledge. The human race has been given another opportunity to develop an enlightened and enduring world order. The vigorous reassertion of man's constructive talents, as exemplified by this gathering of delegates from 41 countries, is reassuring to our hopes for the future.

The concentration of some of the best minds and most zealous spirits of many lands on common objectives in these conferences is convincing evidence that our world is not a conglomeration of geographic entities but a vast neighbourhood of peoples. We can fly around the world now in less time than is required for the incubation of most diseases. In the modern world isolation in the medical sense is as impossible as political and economic isolation. There is no way we can escape the consequences of each other's mischief or misfortune. There is no acceptable alternative to learning to live together in harmony and well-being.

## ROLE OF MEDICAL PROFESSION

The professions you represent are in the forefront of this great humane endeavour. Statesmen and men of affairs usually and unfortunately must deal with urgent, immediate problems—the effects, and not the causes, of the discords that mar human relationships. Seldom are we able to get at the remedy for the mass misery that develops discontent, misunderstanding and violence. That is your particular province, in which you labor as benefactors of mankind.

It would be a great gain if all the prosperous and the well-fed realized as well as you do that the overwhelming majority of the plain people of the earth are still primarily and necessarily concerned with the rudiments of life—enough food to eat, clothes to wear, decent shelter, and relief from hunger, pain and debilitating sickness. Until these fundamental

needs are somehow met, the human race can never achieve the degree of development which is necessary to a peaceful contented world.

The conquest of diseases which hold millions weak and inefficient, the maximum production of foodstuffs on lands now yielding little are tremendously important requirements of the world situation. The tropical regions, in large measure, hold the key to both these necessary advances. They produce large quantities of materials required by the industrial areas of the temperate zones, but the potentials of the tropics largely remain to be developed. The tropical countries do import industrial products, but that market is only a fraction of what it might be.

CONQUEST OF TROPICAL DISEASES WILL  
BENEFIT WORLD

The tropics are the habitation of perhaps half the human race, but a large portion of these people lack greatly in the advantages of modern civilization. A chief factor in restricting improvement in these respects is tropical disease. Little imagination is required to visualize the great increase in the production of food and raw materials, the stimulus to world trade, and above all, the improvement in living conditions, with consequent social and cultural advances, that would result from the conquest of tropical diseases.

This situation presents a challenge that, like the Equator, cuts across national boundaries and local interests. It is an international problem and it should be solved by a pooling of the genius and the resources of many nations. That it is not insoluble from the medical standpoint has been demonstrated by numerous projects with which you are familiar. The task of convincing the Governments and peoples most concerned of the feasibility of controlling and eventually eradicating disease throughout the tropics will be measurably advanced by the discussions at this conference of the latest discoveries of research and the modern techniques in public health.

The achievements and the aims of the co-operative effort represented by these meetings emphasize anew that, man has so far more to gain by uniting in a common fight against his real enemies, such as disease, than by internecine strife on his own kind.

This spirit of generous co-operation for the common good, I am sure, will permeate all your meetings and will assure the notable success which I and my fellow American wish for your joint Congresses.

—USIS.