

CLOSING REMARKS

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We come to the end of the Congress, and to the end of my term as President of the International Leprosy Association (ILA). First of all, let me thank you all for your support and your help during these 10 years. It has been a great experience. And it is time that this experience comes to an end.

In these closing remarks, I shall not talk about the achievements of the ILA over the last 10 years. These were your accomplishments. I shall not epitomize either on the future. This task is for Dr. Wayne M. Meyers, the President-Elect. I would just like to share with you some recollections. It is, I guess, the privilege of a future past president.

Let us start with this Congress in The Hague. It has been a great success. This we owe to the Local Organizing Committee, to all the organizers who worked so hard to prepare it, and to the Secretary of ILA, Dr. Thangaraj.

But, for me, a person who is most present here, a person who from the very first moment made The Hague his choice, is the late Secretary of ILA, Dr. Stanley Browne. I remember sitting with him in this room in October 1983, discussing the pros and cons of The Hague. We would never have imagined that he would not be with us today so that we might benefit from his so valuable experience.

After an outstanding career totally dedicated to the cause of leprosy and to leprosy patients since 1936, in Zaire, then in Nigeria, then in London and around the world, in clinical work, in research, in organization, Stanley Browne knew more than anybody else the needs and the expectations of all. He also had a deep vision of the future. This Congress today in The Hague is also, in many ways, his Congress. His memory will stay alive with us for many, many years as an example and as a model.

Among a large number of other functions, Dr. Browne had served as President of the Medical Commission of ILEP, 1970–1974. He really made the bridge between ILA, of which he was Secretary since 1966, and ILEP

(the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations). In this capacity, through his tact, his knowledge, his experience, he prepared the ground for the mutual beneficial interchanges between the two organizations—the one scientific and professional, the other managerial and socially oriented. There ensued an ever-increasing cooperation. Of this cooperation, the most visible manifestation is the large number of colleagues who are attending this Congress thanks to ILEP fellowships. But beyond that, during this period what a large number of contacts, exchanges, joint ventures, and support with ILEP and with its 22 member-associations throughout the world occurred. It really demonstrates what can be achieved when agencies and individuals with a common goal join efforts.

I hope this collaboration will continue and expand further. In this respect, I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Pierre Van den Wijngaert, the retiring Secretary-General of ILEP. For 20 years, he was instrumental in getting people to work together, overcoming difficulties, solving problems, finding solutions, for the benefit of all. We owe him a great debt. I wish every success to the new Secretary-General, Mr. Paul Sommerfeld.

Collaboration with ILEP has been most important regarding training. Training at all levels—through the *JOURNAL*, through the Congresses, through all ILA members—should in the future become a major priority of our Association.

A number of training activities were carried out in collaboration with WHO and ILEP association-members. Among them I shall take as an example, among others, the workshops organized by the Sasakawa Memorial Health Foundation in South-East Asia and also in other parts of the world. In this respect, as President of ILA over the last decade, 1978–1988, I want to acknowledge the great impetus given to the fight against leprosy by Mr. Sasakawa. Through his deep concern for all human suffering, and particularly for the leprosy patients, as well as by his personal involvement in stim-

ulating and supporting many initiatives at the international level, especially for training, Ryochi Sasakawa has brought a considerable contribution to our common goal of eradicating leprosy as a large health problem. He will be seen in the future as a great benefactor of mankind.

Finally, I want to stress, as one of my most precious recollections over this decade, the excellent collaboration between ILA and the World Health Organization, first with Dr. Sansarricq, Head of the Leprosy Unit and, since 1984, with Dr. Noordeen. Both are now members of the Council.

ILA has been a nongovernmental organization in official relations with WHO since 1948. I am convinced that this collaboration, both with the Leprosy Unit and with TDR, the Special Programme on Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, is one of the best guarantees for the strengthening and the fostering of leprosy research and of national programs aimed at the eradication of leprosy itself.

I wish you all—Dr. Wayne Meyers, the New President, and Dr. Yo Yuasa, the new Secretary, and the entire Council—every success in the future.