EMPIRE RHEUMATISM COUNCIL

ROYAL PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS AT MANSION HOUSE

The Lord Mayor of London presided at a meeting in aid of the Empire Rheumatism Council at the Mansion House, London, on April 25. The speakers were the Lord Mayor, H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, Lord Horder, F.R.C.P., Sir William Willcox, F.R.C.P., Sir Joseph Burn, Mr. Spedan Lewis, Mr. Timbrell Fisher, F.R.C.S., and Sir Walter Kinnear.

Before the meeting the following members of the Empire Rheumatism Council had the honour of being presented to the Duke of Gloucester, and the little daughter of Dr. W. S. C. Copeman and Mrs. Copeman presented a bouquet to the Lady Mayoress: Sir Joseph Burn, K.B.E., Mr. J. Spedan Lewis, Sir A. Henry McMahon, G.C.M.G. (Vice-Presidents, E.R.C.); The Earl of Iddesleigh; Sir William Willcox, K.C.I.E. (Vice-Chairman, E.R.C.); Surgeon Rear-Admiral C. V. Griffiths, D.S.O. (Admiralty Medical Services); Sir Allan Powell, C.B.E. (Mayor, Royal Borough of Kensington); Dr. C. E. Thornton (London County Council Medical Services); Lt.-General Sir George Macdonogh, G.B.E.; Mr. W. W. Grantham, K.C.; Professor L. S. P. Davidson, F.R.C.P.E. (Scottish Branch of the E.R.C.); Dr. W. S. C. Copeman, F.R.C.P. (Hon. Medical Secretary, E.R.C.); Sir Walter Kinnear, K.B.E.; Sir Robert Stanton Woods, F.R.C.P.; Mr. A. G. Timbrell Fisher, M.C., F.R.C.S.; Mr. T. W. Robinson; Mr. B. T. Clegg; Mr. C. G. Izard; Dr. C. W. Buckley, F.R.C.P.; Captain E. J. C. Chapman, M.C.; Mr. F. Dudley Hobbs.

The Lord Mayor, opening the meeting, said: "It is with great pleasure, Your Royal Highness, that I welcome the honour of your presence at the Mansion House as President of the Empire Rheumatism Council on a mission of humanity and of hope to the sufferers from Rheumatic Disease.

"The Royal House of our Empire has worked nobly to justify the oldest and the most honourable title given to Kings and Princes: that of being 'Shepherds of their People,' taking a solicitous interest in good movements for their welfare, and especially in efforts to protect them from the ravages of disease. I recall that your grandfather, King Edward, was the Captain of the army which was enrolled against the plague of tuberculosis, an army which has since made good
progress towards its objective. I trust that you, Sir, will lead this new army to war against Rheumatic Disease to a complete and speedy victory.

"I welcome also with sincere pleasure the eminent scientists and the other leaders of your Council who will constitute its General Staff, wishing you and them God-speed in the task.

"The City of London, which for some centuries enjoyed the happiness of needing no walls to protect it from the invasions of human enemies, has been always prompt to help in building up barriers against other deadly invaders, the forces of disease. It has been particularly a consistent supporter of medical research. The London School of Tropical Medicine, which has done so much to reduce the incidence of the tropical plagues, is one of the many monuments of this wise and humane effort.

"Now the call has come for a campaign against a group of diseases which has a particular domestic interest. I believe that the United Kingdom has an unfortunately high place in the list of countries where those diseases are most rife. To check their ravages is a humane effort which must claim our sympathy and support. It will bring relief from pain, and from that helplessness which is perhaps worse than pain, to very many thousands of homes."

THE PRESIDENT'S CONFIDENCE

The Duke of Gloucester said: "I am very glad to be present at today's meeting for this good cause in the City of London.

"We are living in anxious times, overshadowed by clouds which threaten the prospect of the world being allowed in peaceful security to develop so many plans for making life happier and healthier for all. It is surely proof of the sober strength of mind of the British race that, despite circumstances of no little discouragement, we can give our attention today to a campaign which aims to enlist our energies against the common enemy of human happiness—the forces of destructive disease. This shows, I think, that we are not suffering from nerves and that we are confident of a final happy outcome of present difficulties.

"The Empire Rheumatism Council, of which I have the privilege of being President, has undertaken a task of great importance: to seek out the causes of Rheumatic Disease, and therefore the means for its prevention, and at the same time to plan and to make generally available for present sufferers treatments for its cure and alleviation. Of sufferers there is a tragically great number—in the United Kingdom, at a conservative estimate, over one million adults and over 200,000 children. Many other countries are afflicted to a like degree. The American Committee for the Control of Rheumatism records that one
form of the disease, chronic arthritis, 'is generally recognised in all European and North American countries as the most important problem which that chronic disease presents. . . . A careful house-to-house survey in the State of Massachusetts has shown that there are more cases of chronic rheumatism today than of heart disease, tuberculosis and cancer combined.'

"The prospect of bringing under control a scourge inflicting so much human misery and so much economic wastage must appeal to all, and the prospect is, I am glad to say, a hopeful one. When we recall the triumphs achieved in recent years by medical research in other fields, we have good cause to believe that this problem of Rheumatic Disease will be solved by persevering effort.

"I hope that before this meeting is over you will agree with me that the Empire Rheumatism Council is capable of undertaking this effort with energy and with skill. Its prospectus—if I may use a term familiar to the City—is before you. In the first place, the list of its Board of Directors should inspire every confidence. It is to a remarkable degree representative of the medical and scientific strength of the nation, supported by many of the political and industrial leaders of the community, whom we may hope to see reinforced as the gravity and urgency of the task is more clearly appreciated. Their aid is important. It is for the scientists to lead us in the discovery of facts; then for the statesmen and the business men to guide us in the practical and economical use of those facts, so that good administration may bring prompt and efficient remedy.

"In the second place, the plan of campaign outlined seems sound. It follows closely the recommendations recently made by our National Health Authority as the result of its investigations into the widespread incidence of the Rheumatic Diseases, and of the measures which give the best hope of relief. You will note the provisions for inter-imperial and international co-operation, and the wise decision that knowledge should be sought from all honest and reasonable sources.

"With a first-class Board of Directors and a good plan of campaign, the Council can also claim to its credit, and as a reason for your support, a fine record of preliminary development work. It does not come before you with merely a scheme, but with evidence that the scheme is already in practical operation. Laboratories have been established with whole-time staffs; special tasks of research arranged in some of the medical schools; skilled inquirers sent to Europe and America to study at first-hand foreign methods of investigation and treatment; and several new treatment centres instituted in Great Britain. Surveying the position today compared with that three years ago, when the Empire Rheumatism Council entered upon its work, it can be described as distinctly hopeful.
“Now we are asked to carry a good beginning on to a happy ending; to make success possible by providing the modest budget estimates for the next few years. I sincerely hope that the request will not be in vain, though I realise today we shall have to be thinking about another Budget—unfortunately, not likely to be a modest one. But we in this country have never allowed a necessary and urgent task of this kind to be neglected because of difficult times.

“So with all confidence I commend to your goodwill the work of the Empire Rheumatism Council.”

LORD HORDER ON THE GRAVITY OF THE PROBLEM

Lord Horder said: “None of us can have failed to notice the impressive evidences of the recruiting campaign for the Territorials as we arrived at the Mansion House—a campaign in which you, my Lord Mayor, take a regimental as well as a patriotic interest. We are here today to recruit for a most relentless war—a war of attrition, which has been sapping our man-power for generations. It is a war against that powerful and elusive enemy, Rheumatic Disease.

“If we ‘let up’ in this merciless struggle we expose, as it were, the flank of our nation both in peace and in war; and even at this grave and critical time in our history I am confident that a sustained effort to bring under control this unseen aggressor against our people’s health and happiness and our national efficiency will not be judged inopportune, and certainly will not go by default. I say this, knowing that Your Royal Highness has also expressed your belief that, despite other heavy and pressing cares and demands upon us, we should never for one moment relax our efforts here.

“It is a belief that we very much appreciate, as also do we particularly appreciate the personal—not merely the official—interest in this campaign that is not the least part of the support Your Royal Highness gives us.

“I hardly need stress the seriousness of the situation. The Rheumatic Diseases (considering the numbers affected and the disabilities inflicted) are probably the most serious foes of our national health and efficiency. I was forcibly impressed by this fact in my earliest medical days as a worker on the staff of our great City Hospital of St. Bartholomew’s. Since then I have become convinced that only a resolute and co-ordinated effort can solve the problems presented by attacks from this disease menacing us, as they do, on so wide a front.

“The Empire Rheumatism Council has undertaken this resolute and co-ordinated effort; and, very briefly, here is our plan of campaign and the progress we have already made:
"Search for exact and definite knowledge of causes is our first objective. We must know the causes in order to control with certainty, and to prevent. Visitations of bubonic plague, such as came to this City and to all Europe in earlier centuries, were regarded hopelessly as dread and mysterious calamities until medical research discovered their cause in a disease communicated to man by the parasites of the rat. The ravages of tuberculosis could not be checked, as they are now happily being checked, until the responsible bacillus was identified. The actual causes of Rheumatic Disease are still obscure. We must clear away that obscurity.

"Pursuing this task, we have already at work a small group of permanent research workers; a larger group of part-time workers, assisted by grants; and a very much larger group of honorary consultants, including almost all the scientific members of the Council. You will recognise among their names many who have achieved high distinction in the field of research. To these, with the help they will gain by keeping in touch with fellow-workers in foreign countries, we look for discoveries in due course.

"We must recognise, however, that the enemies which they have to track to their lairs are cunning and skilled in all the arts of camouflage. The research side of our campaign will thus call for patient perseverance. But I venture to say with confidence that there are already some hopeful indications of success. And this I can state with certainty: that our detective staff is keen to follow up promptly every clue. For example, some three months ago, what seemed a hopeful test came to us from a Warsaw University; within a week full particulars of it were in our hands, within a month scientists were at work in three British centres to evaluate it.

"Another research objective, pursued concurrently, is to study all methods of treatment now practised at home and abroad, and all reasonable suggestions for new methods of treatment.

"Last year two Travelling Research Fellows were sent to Europe and America on tours of direct investigation. As you will probably recognise, printed reports and correspondence cannot always give a completely true picture of a method of treatment. To see the practitioner at his work in the hospital ward or the laboratory gives a clearer impression. The observations of these Travelling Fellows are just now to hand. Judging by a cursory examination of them, they will prove of considerable service.

"Much other research into the means of treatment is being carried out in hospitals and clinics in the United Kingdom. Part of this is intended to arrive at what I might call a more precise evaluation of methods which are in common practice, in order that the most promising can be sifted from the rest. Another side of the work is
directed to the investigation (clinically and in the laboratory) of
suggested new methods which give promise of usefulness.

"I must direct your attention here to a grave deficiency which
faces us. The means for applying treatments in Great Britain are
sadly lacking; we must—somehow and soon—correct this lack, because
it is quite evident that, even though the incompleteness of our know-
ledge of the causes of the diseases handicaps progress, we already
have to our hands for immediate use systems of treatment which,
if applied in the early stages and patiently pursued, will save the
majority of sufferers from the curse of needless pain and subsequent
crippling disability.

"As yet these means are available to far too small a percentage
of patients. To make them available to all is an aim that we must
stress, and we are making some progress towards this. The number
of our Treatment Centres has increased perceptibly—I use this word
deliberately, because unfortunately I cannot yet use any stronger one;
but it has increased perceptibly since the foundation of this Council.
In some cases, such as the excellent new Rheumatism Departments
of the Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth, and of the West London
Hospital, these clinics have been founded in close co-operation with
our Council. In other cases they have come into being following the
growing tide of attention aroused mainly by our Council on this menace
of rheumatism.

"And here I would like to say how sincerely grateful we are to you,
gentlemen of the Fourth Estate, for your help in this matter of
educating the public as to the real seriousness of this disease.

"Apart from the appeal of human pity—an appeal that in these
brutal times we cannot too strongly and too often stress in respect
of our own as well as other peoples—the practical aspect, the question
of human wastage arises. We must not let our men, women or
children drift into incurable disability when they can be saved. And
that is why I would stress our hope, which I know is shared by Your
Royal Highness, that very soon we shall be able to report not merely
a 'perceptible,' but a striking increase in the number of Treatment
Centres of all types.

"It is fitting that at this point I should most gratefully acknow-
ledge the splendid degree of assistance we have received, and are
receiving, from various public bodies. The Ministry of Health has
been cordially helpful from the very outset, and I would like to read
from a letter I have received from the Minister of Health, the Right
Honourable Walter Elliot, which concludes:

"'The real danger of these diseases tends to be overlooked by the
common man, and it is the more necessary that they should be studied
closely by the expert. Research both into the causes of Rheumatic
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Disease and into methods of treatment is the primary requirement at the present time. In promoting such research, the Empire Rheumatism Council is fulfilling its most important function, and in this, as in its other activities, I wish it every success.'

"Again, the Admiralty, manning so important a rampart of the Empire's security, has paid us the honour of asking our assistance to cope with the incidence of Rheumatic Disease in the training establishments of the Royal Navy, and in co-operation with the Naval Medical Services we have set up an important Research Foundation. The Foreign Office, too, has given valuable help to our research investigations abroad. The London County Council Medical Services, which have to their credit probably the best plan in the world for checking juvenile rheumatism, have been most helpful; also the British Red Cross Society and several of the great hospitals.

"Not last, nor least, are we indebted to you, my Lord Mayor, for summoning this Mansion House meeting. When the City of London speaks, there speaks democracy in action, a free people freely settling its own affairs, and this fact is not overlooked by our own folk nor by those peoples who have not the privilege of belonging to the peaceful Commonwealth of Nations that is our British Empire. And the City does not speak without due cause. This War on Rheumatism, this offensive and defensive war against the too-long-tolerated aggression of this miserable disease, must not degenerate into a trench warfare of unambitious attrition with its draining of human life. We want National Service against Rheumatism . . . if only for the lowest motive, that all are liable to the menace.

"Therefore, my Lord Mayor, Your Royal Highness, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, I propose the following resolution:

"THAT this meeting recognises the urgent necessity of a National Campaign of research into the causes and best methods of treatment of the Rheumatic Diseases; affirms its confidence in the plans of the Empire Rheumatism Council; and urges the community to support the Council with the means to carry its aims to success."

THE EARNEST WORK OF THE COUNCIL

Sir William Willcox in seconding the resolution said: "It is my privilege to second the resolution which has been proposed by my friend and colleague, Lord Horder, and to undertake the somewhat difficult task of adding to the most effective and admirable statements of our case already made by you, my Lord Mayor, by Your Royal Highness, and by Lord Horder.

"One point I should like to emphasise is that our Council, in its constitution and its working, is a truly Imperial body. We of the
Mother Country recognised from the outset that our peoples overseas, owing allegiance to His Gracious Majesty the King, would wish to share in the great task we have undertaken for the relief of humanity from the grievous scourge of Rheumatic Disease. We have already an affiliated Council established in Canada; another in course of formation in Australia; we expect soon that New Zealand and South Africa will add their strength to the campaign. Also, we have had active support from many of the Crown Colonies; from the remote Falkland Islands, the most southerly outpost of the Empire; from Sierra Leone, a colony which is a monument of another great campaign of human welfare, the Abolition of the Slave Trade; from Hong Kong in the Far East; from Fiji, and from other lands under our flag. Some of these have less direct interest in Rheumatic Disease, being not so much exposed to its attacks, owing to their climate and living conditions. They recognise, however, this as a good work for the security of the Empire which shelters them, and probably also are sensible of the great blessings which have come to them from other medical research campaigns. We aim to recruit all the forces of the British Empire to co-operate with us in our campaign against Rheumatic Disease.

"As Chairman of two key Committees of the Council I should like to testify to the devoted and energetic work carried out by the members of all Committees. A spirit of zeal and a sense of urgency characterise their work, which takes first place in spite of many other claims on their time. The Executive Committee has the benefit of the wise counsel of lay members of great experience in the world of affairs, and in its financial undertakings has the great advantage of the sound advice of the Finance Committee, of which Mr. T. W. Robinson is Chairman. The Research Advisory Committee, which is composed entirely of medical men, and on which the Medical Research Council is represented, gives wise guidance in the schemes of research undertaken, and recommends the extent of financial support of which these are worthy. It also gives guidance and advice to the research workers of the Empire Rheumatism Council and receives periodic progress reports of their work. The Scientific Advisory Committee, under the able chairmanship of Dr. H. Mervyn Gordon, makes preliminary investigations into proposed schemes of research before these are placed before the Research Advisory Committee. It is doing valuable work in the testing of suggested new remedies for rheumatism and determining their efficacy. It is also aiming at the standardisation and valuation of methods of treatment in general use.

"I should like to call attention to the valuable support given to the research in Acute Rheumatism by the Sir Halley Stewart Trust, and also to the splendid help given to this special research work by
a generous American citizen, Mr. Frederick Pearson, who has contributed over £4,000.

"Modern research has demonstrated the close association between Rheumatic Fever and the various forms of Chronic Rheumatism. Our Council feel that a solution of the aetiological problem of Acute Rheumatism will be of great help in the determination of the cause of Chronic Rheumatic Disease.

"I am pleased to say that encouraging results have already been achieved. I express also my appreciation of the valuable work carried on by the Treatment and Hospitals Committee under the able chairmanship of Professor L. S. P. Davidson, who has done so much to help the work of the campaign in Scotland.

"I can convey a message of hope and optimism regarding our work. Arthritis and Chronic Rheumatic Disease were formerly regarded as incurable. The modern methods of treatment have been attended with increasing success and an encouraging percentage of cures has already been attained. One of the most important factors for success is early treatment. At the commencement of the illness causal factors can be ascertained and often eradicated, when a permanent cure naturally follows."

After expressing his thanks to the Organising Secretary, Sir Frank Fox, and the staff for their work, Sir William Willcox continued:

"Let me ask your attention for a moment to the practical issue of the need for the munitions of war. In making our plans we estimated that a sum of half a million pounds from the Home Country and from the Overseas Empire would be sufficient, with careful economy of administration, for the seven years' term of our campaign. We assigned to London and the Home Counties, as their share of the effort, £150,000. That, I think, is an insignificant sum in view of the fact that, apart from its tragic toll of human suffering, Rheumatic Disease is costing our community some scores of millions of pounds annually in loss of working time. Of that £150,000, we have secured by private subscriptions to date just over one-third, in round figures £51,000. We look forward to the balance coming to hand promptly.

"In this regard I wish to acknowledge with sincere gratitude the help given to Treatment Centres associated with our Council by the City of Westminster, the Royal Borough of Kensington, and the Boroughs of Fulham, Hammersmith and St. Marylebone. To them I express thanks for their wise and public-spirited action."

"I beg to second the resolution. It affirms your confidence in the Empire Rheumatism Council. I trust that the general public will share that confidence, and that we shall justify it to the full."

The resolution was carried with acclamation.

Sir Joseph Burn proposed: "That a hearty vote of thanks be
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accorded to H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester for his gracious presence today, with the earnest hope that under his Presidency the Empire Rheumatism Council will succeed in its great task.”

Sir Joseph Burn said: “It was the recent comment of a distinguished American observer that the British Empire is fortunate in having in its Royal Family ‘the finest team of first-class workers in the world.’ That was a true observation. Many of us are often moved to wonder how it is possible for our Royal Princes—and not forgetting our Royal Princesses—to find the time and the energy to enter so fully into all the social and philanthropic activities of the community.

“The importance of the task of the Empire Rheumatism Council cannot be exaggerated. Rheumatic Disease is probably in our country the greatest foe to human happiness. It is responsible every year for spoiling the lives of thousands of young people, bringing them either to premature death or to loss of all prospect of useful life; and on adults it inflicts such suffering that in very many cases death is looked upon as a happy release.

“The speeches which we have heard today and the records of the work already undertaken by the Empire Rheumatism Council convince me that in that Council we have the right body of men to deal with the great curse of rheumatism and that they are working on the right scientific lines.

“When I tell you that the Prudential Approved Societies spent during 1938 nearly £3,500,000 on sickness and disablement benefit you will realise that the amount paid by these societies in respect of rheumatism must be a very large sum.”

Mr. A. G. Timbrell Fisher, in seconding the resolution, cordially and confidently endorsed the hope with which it concluded. This serious scourge of Rheumatic Disease called for every effort that was humanly possible to bring under control its ravages. As to their extent in our community, a significant fact had been brought to his notice by Sir Benjamin Cohen: that in his task of administering Old Age and Widows’ Pensions three out of four of the applicants, men and women, were crippled with Rheumatic Disease.

The Council were deeply indebted to His Royal Highness for accepting its leadership. It was of good augury for success.

The resolution was carried with acclamation.

Mr. J. Spedan Lewis (who was the first financial supporter of the Empire Rheumatism Council, contributing personally £1,000, and in addition collecting among his friends an almost equal sum) proposed the final resolution: “That a hearty vote of thanks be accorded to the Rt. Hon. the Lord Mayor of London, Major Sir Frank Bowater, for presiding at this meeting.”
Sir Walter Kinnear, in seconding the resolution, said that of the many deserving objects which the Lord Mayor had supported during his term of office, there was not one which surpassed in urgency and importance the work of the Empire Rheumatism Council. The Rheumatic Disease group knew no frontiers, was no respecter of persons, claimed youth and age alike as its victims. . . . The pity of it was that much of all this was preventable. The available evidence suggested that Rheumatic Disease could and would be conquered. The eminent medical men and scientists who were giving their services so freely and ungrudgingly to the work of the Council were satisfied that an intensive study into the chief causative factors of rheumatism, concurrently with a methodical research into the most efficacious methods of treatment, could not fail to result in a marked reduction in the incidence of this hitherto baffling disease.

He hoped, under the inspiring leadership of His Royal Highness and the Lord Mayor, there would be a quick and generous response from every section of the public, so that the Council could carry on its work on a wide and intensive scale, free from financial anxiety. Parliament had work of that kind in mind when it expressly permitted by legislation the National Health Approved Societies to make donations out of their surplus money to medical research.

The resolution was carried with acclamation.