ORGANIZATION, POWERS, AND DUTIES OF THE UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE TODAY.

JOHN F. ANDERSON,

Director of the Hygienic Laboratory of the United States Public Health Service.

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The Federal Public Health Service is a bureau of the Treasury Department. Beginning as the Marine Hospital Service, through successive acts of Congress it has undergone a process of evolution so that all of its duties are essentially of a public health character, and it is organized with a view to their performance.

The central bureau at Washington, which is presided over by the surgeon-general, has seven divisions, as follows:

1. Personnel and accounts.
2. Foreign and insular quarantine and immigration.
3. Domestic (interstate) quarantine and sanitation.
4. Sanitary reports and statistics.
5. Scientific research.
7. Miscellaneous.

Each of the six divisions first mentioned is in charge of an assistant surgeon-general, who is directly responsible for administrative matters in connection with his division. In the absence of the surgeon-general the officer next in rank acts in his stead. This is the officer who has charge of the Division of Personnel and Accounts, and who has immediate supervision of the entire personnel and appropriations, and the preparation of the annual estimates therefor.

Through the Division of Foreign and Insular Quarantine and Immigration are administered all matters relating to maritime quarantine and medical inspections of aliens. In the field this division is represented by forty-four quarantine and inspection stations scattered along the several coasts in the continental United States, twenty-five insular stations, and
thirty-seven stations located at foreign ports, and eighty-three immigration stations.

Through the Division of Interstate Quarantine are administered all matters relating to the control of contagious and infectious diseases in interstate traffic. In the field this division is represented by officers engaged in the inspection of Government buildings, suppression of plague outbreaks, and control of epidemics of typhoid fever and other diseases in cooperation with state and local authorities.

The Division of Sanitary Reports and Statistics handles all matters relating to the collection of morbidity reports, reports of epidemics, and of information pertaining to the geographic distribution of disease and to climate in relation to health and disease. It prepares and publishes the weekly Public Health Reports and reprints therefrom.

In the field it is represented by officers of the service wherever stationed, and through the Department of State by American consuls at foreign ports. In the United States it depends largely on the voluntary cooperation of state and municipal authorities to furnish information and forward reports of sanitary conditions within their respective jurisdictions.

The Division of Scientific Research administers all matters relating to investigations of contagious and infectious diseases and matters pertaining to the public health wherever made. In the field it is represented by the Hygienic Laboratory with its four divisions, the plague laboratory in San Francisco, the leprosy investigation station in Hawaii, the pellagra investigation station at Savannah, Ga., the station at Wilmington, N. C., for the investigation of the parasites of man, and by officers engaged in investigations of typhoid fever, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, poliomyelitis, etc., in different parts of the country, and sanitary surveys of navigable waters wherever conducted.

In the Division of Marine Hospitals and Relief are administered all matters connected with the care and treatment of seamen and recruiting for the several bureaus of the department. In the field it is represented by twenty-two marine hospitals and one hundred twenty-one relief stations.

In the Miscellaneous Division are handled all matters in relation to the care and distribution of publications, and to the examinations of surfmen of the Life Saving Service, and to claims for disability in that service.

Today the Public Health Service has a corps of approximately 450 medical officers, 50 pharmacists, and a total personnel of about 2,000.

Advisory Conferences on Administrative Matters.

Under the Constitution and existing statutes, the Federal Public Health Service is restrained from assuming duties that properly devolve upon state and municipal authorities. But their relations are so intimate that Congress has made provision not only for cooperation, but for conferences on
public health matters. In the public health law of July 1, 1902, provision is made for annual conferences between the Public Health Service and state boards and departments of health. Provision is also made for special conferences with all or a part of the state health organizations, and upon the application of not less than five state health authorities, a special conference must be called. The deliberations pertain particularly to administrative measures. In effect, there is thus provided an advisory council on administrative matters, which in its development will insure cooperation and be an arbiter on vexed sanitary questions, and in which each state is entitled to representation.

Advisory Conferences on Scientific Matters.

In the previously mentioned law Congress also provided for an advisory board for consultation relative to investigations to be inaugurated and the methods of making them in the Hygienic Laboratory. This board consists of nine members, four of whom are officers of the Government, the remaining five being scientists eminent in laboratory work and connected with the leading endowed institutions of the country. By this means the service is brought in touch with the great scientific laboratories, and may avail itself of advice from the highest sources.

Congress has thus made provision for councils in respect to both administrative and scientific matters. Their utilization in the highest degree is one of the most important means of development of public-health organization and public-health work.

The foundations have been laid for further development and for the performance of a greater amount of efficient sanitary work. In order that health administration shall be effective, however, it must be adequately supported by appropriations, and it is the securing of these and their wise expenditure that constitute efficient administration.

Federal Health Administration in Relation to Foreign Intercourse.

Federal health administration had for its fundamental object the prevention of the introduction into the United States of pestilential diseases. As long ago as May 27, 1796, a national law authorized the President to direct the revenue officers and revenue cutters to aid in the execution of quarantine, and also in the execution of the health laws of the states. As a further means of aiding foreign commerce, provisions were made in successive navigation laws to promote the health and comfort of passengers at sea, and in 1798, provision was also made for the care and treatment of persons employed in the merchant marine.

Foreign and Insular Quarantine.

The necessity for more and more extensive Federal supervision over international traffic was made apparent by repeated epidemics. The
first permanent quarantine law, passed April 29, 1878, was a result of the widespread and severe epidemic of yellow fever during the previous year. The passage of the law of February 15, 1893, was intimately associated with the outbreak of cholera in Europe in 1892, and the quarantine act of June 19, 1906, followed the epidemic of yellow fever in the Southern States in 1905. Under the above-mentioned laws and a few minor ones, there was finally developed the national system of quarantine as it exists today—a system, the development of which occupied approximately 100 years.

All quarantine operations in the United States are conducted under the supervision of the Federal Government, and, with two or three exceptions, all stations are conducted by Federal officers.

Sanitary Supervision of Immigration.

A long series of immigration laws have been enacted between the periods March 20, 1819, and February 20, 1907, their general objects from a hygienic standpoint being the improvement of the health and comfort of arriving aliens, and the development of a stronger race in the United States.

On arrival at domestic ports, all aliens are required to undergo medical inspection, and for those suffering with disease, hospitals are maintained. The object of the medical supervision of immigration is to exclude the physically and mentally unfit, and especially the latter, who will endow their offspring with an unstable mentality, thereby bringing about the further increase of insanity in the United States. This medical inspection is conducted by the Public Health Service.

Federal Health Administration in Relation to Interstate Intercourse.

The administrative procedures in international sanitation having been established, and their further improvement assured, the great public health problems of the Nation are now of an interstate and intrastate character.

The Federal public health statutes are based upon, or are carefully in accord with that clause of the Constitution which gives the right to Congress to regulate commerce between the states. On account of the far-reaching effect of interstate intercourse on our national life, the field for public health activities on the part of the Federal Government is wide, but it must not be occupied in such manner as to usurp the power of the states or impair the efficiency of state and local public health authorities.

The first Federal statute relating to the public health provided that there should be cooperation between Federal and local authorities, and this principle has been recognized in all subsequent legislation and followed in its enforcement.

Quarantine and Sanitation.

Under the quarantine act of February 15, 1893, the secretary is authori
ized to issue regulations for the prevention of the spread of infectious and contagious diseases from one state to another, where the regulations of the states are inadequate. These regulations may be enforced by state and local authorities, but the Federal Public Health Service is authorized to cooperate in their enforcement, and should the states fail or refuse, the President may adopt such measures as in his judgment shall be necessary.

The powers under the above-mentioned statutes are broad, and the extent of their enforcement by the Federal Government depends on the facilities provided, the necessities in each case, and the state of public opinion in respect to the advantages of sanitation. Examples of work of this character that may be mentioned are cooperative measures for the collection and examination of rodents to prevent plague; anti-typhoid campaigns in urban and rural districts, and sanitary surveys of interstate and international waters in relation to the prevention of the spread of typhoid fever.

There is necessity not only of quarantine measures to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, but sanitary measures to prevent their propagation. These include the sanitation of trains and vessels and the supplies used aboard, the regulation of conditions under which the employees of common carriers work, and the exclusion of dangerous or infected merchandise from transportation.

**THE CONTROL OF EPIDEMICS.**

On account of the relation of epidemics to the hygienic and commercial welfare of the country, the Federal Public Health Service may, under the provisions of the above mentioned law, assume responsibilities in respect to their control under the direction of the Secretary of the Treasury and the President. In the event of outbreaks of cholera, yellow fever, smallpox, plague, or typhus fever in any part of the United States, the President is also authorized to cause regulations to be issued and enforced to prevent their spread, and an epidemic fund of approximately half a million dollars is appropriated annually for expenditures of the Federal Public Health Service in suppressing epidemics of these diseases.

It is under such authority that the epidemics of yellow fever in the Southern States, the outbreaks of plague in California and our island possessions, and similar outbreaks have been handled. In every instance, however, there has been thorough cooperation on the part of the Federal, state and local authorities. The equity of our form of Government requires that the two latter shall exercise their police powers to the fullest extent, and it is on request of these authorities that the Federal Government goes to their assistance. This may be advisory in character, or may assume a more active form.

When material aid is extended, the Government's funds are required to
be expended by officers of the Federal Public Health Service, and these latter are, therefore, placed in charge, and have the cooperation of state and local officials as well as officers of the Federal Government.

The occurrence of epidemics affords opportunity for investigations of an epidemiologic and research character, and advantage is taken of such situations. As an example may be mentioned the studies of plague in California and typhus fever in Mexico City, of yellow fever, of dengue, and a number of others.

**Control of Biologic Products in Interstate Traffic.**

The dangers to the public health from the exploitation of contaminated or inert biologic products impelled Congress to pass the act of July 1, 1902, regulating the propagation and sale in interstate traffic of viruses, serums, toxins and analogous products. By its provisions, licenses are issued to establishments to engage in such traffic. Prior to the issue of licenses inspections are made of each establishment by officers of the United States Public Health Service, and examination is made of all products for which license is desired. These examinations are repeated from time to time, samples obtained in the open market being used.

**Collection and Collation of Sanitary Information.**

The successful administration of public health laws depends essentially upon a knowledge of the existence and current prevalence of communicable diseases, the conditions that favor their propagation and spread, and the measures that are required for their control.

Information is received by the Federal Public Health Service from American consuls throughout the world regarding dangerous diseases that exist or are epidemic in foreign ports.

Of even greater importance to the health of the country are the collection and collation of sanitary information and reports regarding the prevalence of diseases and the occurrence of epidemics within the states. This work on the part of the Federal Government is carried on with the voluntary cooperation of state and local authorities.

Sanitary information and reports of the occurrence and prevalence of disease are collected and published by the United States Public Health Service.

The extent to which notification of cases of sickness can be carried out depends upon the facilities provided the Federal Public Health Service and, primarily, upon the development of local health organization within the respective states. The difficulties encountered in the enforcement of the notification of cases of disease in the United States are not unlike those encountered by sanitary authorities abroad, but in overcoming them there will be performed one of the most important duties in connection with the preservation of the public health.
Dissemination of Information Relating to the Public Health.

Sanitary reports and statistics and the results of scientific investigations are of value only as they are made public and used. An important administrative measure, therefore, is the distribution of public health literature and the presentation of the public health lectures and exhibits. By these means the Federal Public Health Service has been able to disseminate a considerable amount of sanitary information and participate in the educational propaganda.

Among the publications issued are the Hygienic Laboratory bulletins, bulletins of the Yellow Fever institute, Public Health bulletins, the weekly Public Health reports, and miscellaneous documents. The Hygienic Laboratory bulletins represent the results of scientific investigations conducted in the laboratory. The Public Health bulletins are popular in character, and are utilized to convey sanitary information to health officials and to the public generally. The weekly Public Health reports are issued primarily for the benefit of health authorities as an aid in administration. Their utility is recognized throughout the world, and their improvement as contemplated will render them the most useful organs in health administration in this country.

The Public Health bulletins are to be further popularized and made of interest to individuals, and they should be distributed by millions.

Investigations of Matters Pertaining to the Public Health.

Another important function of the Public Health Service in relation to the public health, and perhaps the most important one, is the conduct of scientific investigations. By this means Federal administration in public health matters is simplified and rendered more accurate; local authorities are likewise aided, and through them the people are benefited by being taught the degree of sanitary excellence that may be attained.

By an act of March 3, 1901, investigations of contagious and infectious diseases and matters pertaining to the public health were given definite status in law. Provision was made whereby laboratory investigations would be systematically carried on. Through this provision and in connection with the enforcement of the quarantine laws investigations have been made in Washington and different parts of the country. In order to comply with the law, however, this work was carried on largely through the Hygienic Laboratory.

By an act of Congress approved August 14, 1912, broader powers were conferred on the Public Health Service to "study and investigate the diseases of man and conditions influencing the propagation and spread thereof, including sanitation and sewage and the pollution, either directly or indirectly, of the navigable streams and lakes of the United States."

There is thus abundant authority for both laboratory and field investiga-
tions by the Public Health Service. As in the past the investigations will be conducted by officers specially trained and with such cooperation as state and local health authorities may be able to render. But in order that the great needs of the country may be met, more men and more money must be provided and the Public Health Service must have the active support of individuals, professional associations, and other organizations to be benefited.

Congress has shown a beginning appreciation of the need for more men and more money, by a liberal appropriation to be used for investigations of the diseases of man and the conditions influencing their propagation and spread, and the pollution of the navigable waters of the United States. Increased appropriations were also made for the work of the Hygienic Laboratory and an additional building authorized.

Many highly important problems await solution. Among them may be mentioned the standardization of biologic and other therapeutic products, the determination of the conditions causing pellagra and certain other diseases, the extent of the migrations of tuberculous and other patients from one locality to another, the ascertaining of the influence of artificial illuminants on health, the determination of the relation of housing and other conditions to labor efficiency, and the prescribing of reasonable standards to control stream pollution.

Requests are received daily from all parts of the country for information regarding sanitary problems and methods of handling them. These requests are an excellent indication of the amount and extent of work to be performed in the immediate future. In one section of the country the question of the pollution of streams is pressing for solution; in another, it may be industrial accidents and poisoning; in another, the question of the reduction of infant morbidity; and in still another, the measures that must be taken to eradicate malaria and other communicable disease. Federal health administration involves a wise selection of the problems to be investigated and the securing of appropriations necessary to carry them on.

To summarize briefly: The natural lines of development of the Public Health Service may well be, first, in the increase of its activities in regard to vital statistics, mortality and morbidity; second, in a great extension of its field of research, especially with a view of establishing minimum sanitary standards of every description; third, in enlarging the extent of its cooperation with state and local boards of health; and, fourth, in greatly increasing its powers of diffusing knowledge.

All will agree, I am sure, that the development of the Public Health Service in such directions portends a future rich in possibilities for public health achievement, and that all who have the health interests of the country at heart should join forces in trying to bring those things to pass.