

HANSENOLOGIA INTERNATIONALIS

Help liberate your own country from the terror of leprostigma. An appeal to readers.

EDITORIAL

A previous editorial (*) summarized the principal reasons why the obnoxious pejorative "leprosy" must be wiped out from modern medical terminology. It closed with an appeal to the International Leprosy Association, either to accept the conclusions of four extensive inquiries conducted in Brazil, Argentina and the U.S., proving the psycho-social and medical malignancy of that pejorative, *or to conduct its own inquiry, in order to confirm or negate those conclusions.*

That appeal was not taken into consideration by the I.L.A. at its 11th International Congress (Mexico City, 1978); likewise, the one published by the Carville patients' magazine "The Star" (**) was ignored, in spite of the fact that the Workshop on "Human Aspects in the Treatment of Leprosy Patients" of the same Congress reached the conclusion that "the word leprosy is to be used with caution since it tends to have a socio-historical, in addition to a medical connotation".

Countries afflicted by the demoralizing, terrorizing and counter-educational pejorative "leprosy" — or other local equivalent — are, however, free to conduct their in

dependent inquiries, or else to accept those which have already proved, beyond any doubt, that the word "leprosy" is a "disintegrator of the patient's personality" (1), a "prejudice bearer" (2) a "continued psychic pain and trauma" (3), "the most negative of all medical terms" (4).

The latter alternative was preferred by the governments of Brazil and Portugal, by the Public Health Service of the U.S., by the Ministries of Health of Bolivia and Costa Rica. To our knowledge, movements to banish the stigmatizing pejorative are on the way in Cameroon, Israel, South Africa, Surinam and Venezuela. A few authors and services in these countries as well as in Argentina, Burma, Colombia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, England, Ethiopia, France, Guyana, Holland, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, U . R . S . S . , United States and Uruguay have also praised and/or adopted new and scientific appellations.

These facts were considered by our editorial board and by many workers in Brazil

(*) "To conserve the opprobrious pejorative 'leprosy' (and equivalents) is to conserve leprostigma, to favor sensationalism, to block education, to aggravate the disease and to spread the endemic". **The Disease Hanseniasis**, 1:163-171, 1977

(**) "There is no middle of the road". **The Star**, 38(1): 1. 16. 1978.