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THE FIRST AMERICAN MEDICOLEGAL CONGRESS

Ralph F. Turner

Ralph F. Turner is Assistant Professor, Department of Police Administration, Michigan State College. Mr. Turner has been active in the field of police science both as a student at the University of Wisconsin where he received a B. S. S. degree in chemistry after specializing in police laboratory techniques and also in later years. Before joining the faculty of Michigan State College he was Supervisor of the Kansas City (Mo.) Police Laboratory and has served as Book Review Editor of the Journal for several years. He was a participant in the program of the American Medicolegal Congress of which he now writes.—EDITOR.

An important step toward the organization of a permanent forensic science society was taken during the meeting of the First American Medicolegal Congress which was held in St. Louis, Missouri, January 19-21, 1948, under the auspices of the Board of Police Commissioners of St. Louis.

This auspicious gathering of distinguished leaders in the field of legal medicine and forensic science was brought about through the efforts of Dr. R. B. H. Gradwohl of St. Louis who indicated in his opening address that the idea for the Congress resulted from his conference with Dr. Israel Castellanos of Havana, Cuba, during the spring of 1947. Mr. Sidney Kaye, Toxicologist, Chief Medical Examiner's Office, Commonwealth of Virginia, Richmond, assisted Dr. Gradwohl and Dr. Castellanos as Secretary-Treasurer of the Congress.

Originally the congress was to be known as the Pan-American Medicolegal Congress, but due to the various difficulties which Latin-American representatives would have encountered in attending the meeting the title was changed to American. However, the meeting did receive the whole-hearted support of many who could not attend personally.

A study of the program will indicate the excellent quality of the meeting as evident by the imposing array of speakers. Following addresses by Hon. A. P. Kaufmann, Mayor of St. Louis; Col. H. Sam Priest, President, Board of Police Commissioners, and Col. Jeremiah O'Connell, Chief, St. Louis Police Dept., the following papers were read:

Outline of Purposes and Suggestions for Organization, R. B. H. Gradwohl, M. D., Director, Research Bureau, St. Louis Police Dept. (For a summary of this paper and additional information on the Congress see: "The First American Medicolegal Congress", *The Laboratory Digest*, 11: (9) (Feb. 1948): 5-7. Gradwohl Laboratories, St. Louis, Mo.)

Standardization and Organization of Police Science Techniques, Ralph F. Turner, Asst. Prof., Dept. of Police Administration, Michigan State College, East Lansing.

Blood Alcohol—Its Applications and Pitfalls from Medicolegal Standpoint, I. M. Babinowitch, M. D., Montreal, Canada.

The Use of the Intoximeter, LeMoyné Snyder, M. D., Medicolegal Adviser, Michigan State Police, Lansing, Mich.

The Use of Blood Tests in Cases of Disputed Parentage, Alexander S. Wiener, M. D., Serologist, Office of Chief Medical Examiner, New York, N. Y.

Blood Grouping of Blood Stained Evidence in Medicolegal Examination, B. J. White, M. D., Chemist, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Blood Stains in Police Work, Dr. Delio Garcia Romeu, Prof. Chemistry, National Bureau of Identification, Havana, Cuba.

Forensic Psychiatry, Lowell S. Selling, M. D., Director, Mental Health Program, Florida State Board of Health, Jacksonville, Fla.

The Sex Criminal, Val Satterfield, M. D., Asst. Prof., Clinical Psychiatry, Washington University Medical School, St. Louis, Mo.

The Psychopathic Personality as a Social and Psychiatric Problem, Alex J. Arief, M. D., and David B. Rotman, M. D., The Psychiatric Institute, Chicago.

War Crimes, Their Medicolegal and Social-Psychological Aspects, Leo Alexander, M. D., Associate Director of Psychiatric Research, Boston State Hospital, Instructor Psychiatry, Tufts College Medical School, Boston.

Forensic Psychiatry in the Navy, Commander W. R. Griswold (MC) USN., Chief of Neuropsychiatry, Portsmouth Naval Prison, Portsmouth, N. H.

Medicolegal Aspects of the Polygraph, Leonarde Keeler, Chicago, Illinois.

A Rapid Procedure for the Detection and Estimation of Alkaloids in Body Materials with Demonstration of a Simple Tilting Extractor for this Purpose, R. N. Harger, Ph. D., Prof. of Biochemistry and Toxicology, Indiana University Medical School, Indianapolis, Ind.

The Barbiturate Problem, W. J. R. Camp, M. D., Prof. of Pharmacology and State Toxicologist in the Univ. of Illinois, Chicago.

Fractional Sublimation of Micro Samples Isolated from Biological Materials, C. J. Umberger, M. D., Micro-Analyst, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, New York, N. Y.

Identification of Different Barbiturates in Fatal Poisonings, C. J. Umberger, M. D., Micro-Analyst, and M. Felstein, M. D., Asst. Micro-Analyst, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, New York, N. Y.

The Treatment of Barbiturate Poisoning with Intravenous Amphetamine Sulfate, A. W. Freireich, M. D., Toxicologist, Office of Chief Medical Examiner, Nassau County, New York.

Toxicites and Hazards of the Newer Insecticides and Rodenticides, Col. John R. Wood, Medical Corps, Chief, Medical Div., Army Chemical Center, Maryland.

Sudden and Unexpected Natural Death, Milton Helpert, M. D., Deputy Chief Medical Examiner, New York, New York.

Investigation of Food and Drug Poisoning under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, Roy S. Pruitt, Chief, St. Louis Station, Food and Drug Administration.

Identification of Seminal Stains, Sidney Kaye, Toxicologist, Chief Medical Examiner's Office, Commonwealth of Virginia, Richmond.

Medicolegal Investigation of Deaths in Conflagrations, Frank R. Dutra, M. D., Pathologist, Kettering Laboratory of Applied Physiology, University of Cincinnati Medical School; Pathologist to Coroner of Hamilton County, Ohio.

Limitations for the Forensic Scientist, G. G. Swett, U. S. Postal Inspector, Examiner of Questioned Documents, St. Louis, Mo.

Legal Loopholes in Toxicological Investigations, Orville Richardson, J. D., St. Louis, Mo., and Herbert S. Breyfogle, M. D., Chief Medical Examiner, Commonwealth of Virginia, Richmond.

The Relationship of Trauma to Cancer, Cyril Costello, M. D., Surgeon and Research Associate to the Barnard Free Skin and Cancer Hospital; Instructor in Surgery, Washington University Medical School; Medical Director, St. Louis City Hospital.

Temperature Variations with Respect to the Specific Gravity of Glass Fragments, Asso. Prof. Donald F. McCall, Dept. of Police Science and Administration, State College, Pullman, Washington. [This paper appears on pages 113-118 of this number of the *Journal*. Several other outstanding papers which were part of this program will appear in subsequent issues.]

The business discussions were relatively short, being given to consideration of plans for the formation of a permanent organization.

Realizing the great value in creating a society which would not suffer an abortive death, those in attendance wisely suggested that serious deliberation be given to the mechanics of organization and the formulation of policy.

To this end, a committee was appointed by Dr. Gradwohl to prepare a report which would contain suggestions for establishment of a permanent organization. This Committee was composed of Dr. LeMoyne Snyder, Mr. Leonarde Keeler, Mr. Charles C. Thomas, Mr. Sidney Kaye, and Mr. Orville Richardson.

The committee submitted an Interim Report, which was read and discussed on the second day of the meeting, and a Final Report which was agreed upon at the final session of the Congress.

In order to indicate the thinking of the group as reflected in the two reports, they are reproduced herewith.

INTERIM REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON A PERMANENT ORGANIZATION

Your Committee on a Permanent Organization met informally yesterday afternoon and evening with a number of guests to this Congress. Many important and helpful suggestions were made to us, and all of these were carefully considered at a lengthy meeting attended not only by all members of your Committee, but also by others whom we invited to participate in our discussion. This Interim Report represents the unanimous and combined judgment of all of the Committee and those who met with us last night.

With a full understanding and appreciation of the valuable contributions made by many others before, and yet realizing the need of continued concerted effort to complete this law-science diathesis, we, the members of your Committee, have proposed the following resolutions:

First. Be It Resolved that this assembly warmly commend Dr. R. B. H. Gradwohl, of St. Louis, Missouri, and Dr. Israel Castellanos, of Havana, Cuba, for their initiative in proposing and organizing this meeting, and that Dr. Gradwohl be duly honored by our appreciation for the unremitting time, thought, and energy which he has so unselfishly given to making this meeting possible.

Be It Further Resolved that the Board of Police Commissioners of the City of St. Louis, be apprised of our gratitude for its hospitality and aid in this meeting and the promotion of an advancement in law-science relationships.

Be It Further Resolved that this convocation of men interested in a better understanding and more perfect co-operation between Law and Science be recorded as desirous of joining with others unable to attend in establishing and supporting a permanent organization, national or Pan-American in scope, for the following or similar purposes:

(1) To promote the use of scientific methods and knowledge in the solution of legal problems and controversies, (2) to develop and extend a better understanding of the application of legal doctrines to scientific professions, (3) to improve professional qualifications of scientists engaged in the assistance of the courts and attorneys, and (4) to plan, organize, and administer meetings, publications, reports, and other projects for the stimulation and advancement of the above purposes, and the standardization and improvement of scientific techniques, tests, and criteria.

Your Committee further feels that this germ of a permanent organization conceived in the minds of many interested in these purposes should be nurtured to full growth and esteem among all men of learning and jurisprudence. So important is that step of initial organization that further reflection by this entire assembly should be given to this subject before we act.

There are two avenues open to us. We may either proceed to the formation here and now of a permanent organization and the election of a small group of officers to carry on after we disband, or we may defer the formation of that organization until we all have the opportunity of consulting with and eliciting the assistance of others not present today. Briefly, this second method would contemplate the formation of a committee, either large or small, which would act to invite others to meet and join with us later, perhaps this summer, at some centrally located place in the United States, there to form a society or institute devoted to the purposes we have mentioned. Such a Steering Committee could be drawn from any or all of us here at this meeting and probably should include many others representing all geographical sections of this nation and divisions of science related to law. You will note that many such sections and divisions are not present today. Without them our efforts may be premature, abortive, and wasted. Every person here today will know large numbers of men who will undoubtedly be of one mind with us in the formation of a permanent organization. We should weigh carefully the desirability of consulting them upon the form of a Constitution and the procedures and mechanics of developing these purposes to which we prescribe. These men, many of whom were invited to attend, but who could not be here, are our fellows in common thought and endeavor not only in Science and in Law, but also in the desire to participate in the initial molding of such an organization.

Your Committee at the present time is strongly inclined, therefore, to this second choice of sharing the honor and responsibility of final organization with our colleagues and associates who did not or could not attend this Congress. However, we have elected not to submit a final resolution or report until the issues and probable consequences are thoroughly understood by this entire assembly.

Therefore, this Committee tenders an interim rather than a final report, and desires a perpetuation until tomorrow so that these two alternatives may be freely discussed and carefully considered by all of us here—not just those on the Committee—before we undertake action which may be precipitate or inadvisable, and for those reasons may fail to bear fruit. We propose, therefore, and now submit that each of you here reflect upon these matters of procedure and consult with one another so that

a consensus of opinion and thought may crystallize and then be offered in a final report tomorrow.

January 20, 1948.

LEMOYNE SNYDER
LEONARDE KEELER
CHARLES C. THOMAS
SIDNEY KAYE
ORVILLE RICHARDSON

FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON A PERMANENT ORGANIZATION

There can be no Justice without Truth, whether that Truth be attested by lay or expert witnesses. That Truth of which we speak is something more than the mere willingness of witnesses to relate what they saw, heard, or know. Individual fidelity to this moral standard which we term honesty is only one aspect of Truth and is not always sufficient to serve the ends of ultimate justice between two litigants or members of society. The witnesses at witchcraft trials many years ago were honest enough in the testimony they gave. Yet they were imperfect gatherers of knowledge, and their testimony was not truthful in the larger sense that it corresponded with reality. Without deviating into an epistemological discussion concerning the ability of any human agency to separate the perceiver from the perceived, it is commonly known that all knowledge is either consciously or unconsciously encumbered not only with the imperfections of the observer, but mostly by preconceived notions, prejudices, and inadequate mechanisms for differentiating between appearances and reality.

Science, as an empirical method of discovering eternal truths in nature, is the one important handmaiden by which Truth and then Justice may be unfolded. And in so far as science has advanced to unroll a cloud of ignorance from the minds of men, to that extent have the legal controversies of men been more equitably adjusted.

Therefore, it has always been the sincere hope and endeavor of all men of a common mind, either scientists, lawyers, or jurists, to further the ends of Justice by maintaining a greater correlation between Science and Law. Some of these men have from time to time banded together in law-science societies or institutes to promote those worthy purposes.

At the present time and to our knowledge, no national medico-legal society, no national society of any kind, exists for the purposes outlined in our Interim Report directed mainly toward greater co-operation between Law and Science. We have all agreed that the formation of such a society is not only desirable, but is imperative if material progress in this law-science relationship is to continue.

As a part of our final report we have thought it well to bring before you again one of the resolutions submitted in our Interim Report and adopted as a part thereof:

Be it further Resolved that this convocation of men interested in a better understanding and more perfect co-operation between law and science be recorded as desirous of joining with others unable to attend

in establishing and supporting a permanent organization, national or Pan-American in scope, for the following or similar purposes:

(1) To promote the use of scientific methods and knowledge in the solution of legal problems and controversies, (2) to develop and extend a better understanding of the application of legal doctrines to scientific professions, (3) to improve professional qualifications of scientists engaged in the assistance of the courts and attorneys, and (4) to plan, organize, and administer meetings, publications, reports, and other projects for the stimulation and advancement of the above purposes, and the standardization and improvement of scientific techniques, tests, and criteria.

The society or institute must be national in scope and represent all geographical sections of this nation and all divisions of science which interact with law to promote justice. After further thought and deliberation upon the matter since yesterday, your Committee has proposed the following resolution:

Be It Resolved that the Chairman of this meeting be authorized to appoint a committee which will act pro tem or as a steering or Invitational Committee with the following instructions:

First, to sound out thought throughout the United States of all scientists, lawyers, and jurists who would be of substantial assistance in the attainment of our purpose, and obtain from them suggestions and assistance in the formation of a national medico-legal society or national institute of law-science relationships.

Second, after stimulating interest in these matters and making known our purposes to others, to appoint a time and place within the next year for a convocation of interested individuals who desire to participate in the formation of such a society or institute.

Third, to arrange a program for that meeting and to accept and spend any voluntary financial contributions which may be offered to assist this Committee.

January 21, 1948.

LEMOYNE SNYDER
LEONARDE KEELER
CHARLES C. THOMAS
SIDNEY KAYE
ORVILLE RICHARDSON

It is felt that in view of the great need for a scientific organization of this type, and realizing the potential value of such a society in police science, all those interested in this profession will see fit to dwell upon the matter and offer constructive assistance to those who are now laboring with the vital organization plans.

APPENDIX

Dr. R. B. H. Gradwohl has announced the appointment of the following persons to serve on the Steering Committee of the American Medico-legal Congress. Readers are invited to contribute comments or suggestions to any of the members:

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