A NATION-WIDE SANITATION PROGRAM *

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As one of the pioneer organizations in the field of food sanitation I want to congratulate the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MILK AND FOOD SANITARIANS for splendid progress over the years. One has only to review the JOURNAL OF MILK AND FOOD TECHNOLOGY to realize that this Association has developed into a strong, functioning organization in the milk and food field.

PROGRESS IN SANITATION

A study of the history and development of sanitation shows noteworthy progress in certain areas. No one can deny the success story of water and sewage; the United States is one of the few countries in the world where water from a public supply can be drunk without fear of disease. Pioneers in this field rightfully deserve respect and admiration for the splendid job they have accomplished.

The National Association of Sanitarians on the west coast has made marvelous progress in establishing recognition for the sanitarian as a professional worker in the field of public health sanitation. As you review this record it is apparent that years of hard work have been a prelude to great accomplishments. The Sanitarian's Association deserves praise and credit for the splendid job they have accomplished.

PROBLEM IN EDUCATION

The American public cannot, or will not, extract from the scientific literature in the field of sanitation material which it can translate into a tangible sanitation story, understandable by lay people. The public needs and demands sanitation. It is entitled to know how this program affects and is affected by them. The public demands understandable facts—not detailed publications of technical data whose practical implication can be grasped only by specialists in the field of sanitation.

Is our program described in terms that are understandable by the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Parents and Teachers Association? Is it a program in which they are eager to participate? The real strength of the program could be measured by the degree of understanding attained and the kind of action that should follow such understanding. Can our present program in sanitation stand up to such realistic tests? Would we be proud of the understanding our citizens have of sanitation? The answer is emphatically NO!
The ambitious individual or the ambitious group, in order to demonstrate leadership and to maintain leadership in the field of sanitation, must recognize the entire problem confronting us today. The many aspects of the question must be welded together as a whole into one story. Sanitation must be pulled together if we are to have a success story. Individual techniques, and isolation of certain groups, will not tend to build sanitation as a great part of American life. They will not demonstrate to the public the need for sanitation in establishing a better standard of living.

The public, in terms of the average family around the kitchen table, must have a clear-cut understanding of sanitation in terms of: What are you as a sanitarian doing which is of direct help to him and to his family? How does he, as an individual citizen, benefit by the sanitation program in his community? How does he fit into the program and exactly how does the program fit his needs? The need for public understanding is paramount; research in sanitation is of little value unless and until the practical value of the newer knowledge is put to work in the lives of individuals.

The sanitation field today offers an unlimited opportunity for leadership in the over-all picture of environmental sanitation; leadership in terms of making sanitation tangible to the average man and his family as it applies to his daily life.

Certainly sanitation is not an ordinance or a technique, an individual or a certain group. It is more than that, and the National Sanitation Foundation has suggested that sanitation is a way of man living with man, that "it is the quality of living that is expressed in the clean home, the clean farm, the clean business and industry, the clean neighborhood, the clean community. Being a way of life it must come from within the people; it is nourished by knowledge and grows as an obligation and an ideal in human relations."

One of the very basic elements which makes a city such as New York or Chicago possible is man's ability to live with man, and one of the first steps of man living with man is cleanliness, or sanitation. I do not plan to discuss the number of techniques which are involved in sanitation, but I would like to project our thinking into the future philosophy of sanitation.

Sanitation techniques, as tangible to man, are one thing, and sanitation as an important part of the average man's life in the center of the block is another. True, the techniques are all important to the sanitation worker and also to industry, but the public is not one bit interested in the details of sanitation. It is interested only from the viewpoint of how sanitation affects living. This brings up an entirely different picture of sanitation. I mentioned leadership, and it is in this area of making sanitation tangible to the man in the center of the block that leadership is definitely needed. Some months ago the National Sanitation Foundation brought out seven areas in the field of sanitation which they thought needed more activity—those seven being: (1) trained personnel; (2) research in sanitation; (3) sanitation education; (4) National Sanitation Clinic; (5) testing laboratory; (6) publication; and (7) textbooks. In the third area of education, or public relations, we have developed some thinking which I would like to present at this time. It is our hope that the major emphasis on sanitation can be taken out of the negative area, that of rats, garbage cans, bacteria counts, etc., and placed on an educational approach or a positive approach. This approach can be centered around family activities and have the focal point of sanitation education not necessarily in the sick area of sanitation alone, but in the well area also, such a bringing to the attention of the school child as well as the adult the essentials and benefits of clean living manifested in the home, neighborhood and community.
**NEW POSITIVE APPROACH**

In an effort to organize our thinking regarding this sanitation approach, we have divided our sanitation functions into what we call *curative* sanitation and *preventive* sanitation. In the curative area we think of a sick area of sanitation where treatment is needed because of a particular situation. We probably can list our control measures, our ordinances, techniques, laws, rules and regulations, and all that has to do with regulatory sanitation control in this area. This, perhaps, is where public health sanitation people have spent the greatest part of their time, and in this area is only a small part of the public.

The other side of our thinking deals with preventive sanitation which is educational for the well people of the community. These people constitute a larger percentage of the population, and they are a group that must understand our program, that must appreciate our program and must lend a hand to our entire sanitation effort if we are to have a balanced program in the community. This group includes, perhaps, the man who lives on Knob Hill in his ivory tower, and does not think sanitation is of real concern to him, and that sanitation laws, rules and regulations are written only for the man on the other side of the tracks. We feel that both curative and preventive sanitation must be practiced in order for our subject to be popular. The man in the well area certainly does not appreciate talking about rats, garbage cans, bacteria counts, or the negative side of sanitation. He will, however, respond to a positive approach when you tie up sanitation with his daily living in terms of beauty, cleanliness, morale, security, pride, dollar value, and social relationships.

The over-emphasis of the negative approach to sanitation and the sick area is a liability. Selling sanitation in the well area, using the positive approach and reaching the people outside of the sick area of sanitation is a real asset, not only to the profession, but to the betterment of community health. Sanitation workers over the years have been so handicapped by lack of funds and personnel and have had placed upon them such a tremendous responsibility of accomplishing results in the sick areas of sanitation that in many cases they have not had the opportunity to evaluate the good that can come to the sanitation worker by activities on the preventive side of sanitation in the so-called well area of people.

Let us not sell sanitation short! Let us look at the subject in its entirety and collect some of the assets that await us with this positive approach and talk to all the people instead of just a few. Sanitation in terms of rats, garbage cans, high bacteria counts, etc., is not appealing to any one. In fact, it is not hard to find health officers who are ashamed of the subject and do not have any particular interest in the field of sanitation. Sanitation as a way and means of a better American standard of living thought of in terms of beauty, security, social relationships, etc., is not only tangible to every citizen in the United States but can definitely be made part of his responsibility in society.

**ILLUSTRATIVE SANITATION PROGRAM**

Recently, through the cooperation of Mr. Clarence Klassen, State Sanitary Engineer of Illinois, we had the opportunity of trying this suggested positive approach of sanitation in a community. This positive approach was tried before luncheon clubs, and in two county health department units. Time will not permit me to go into detail regarding this experience, but I would like to cover the main happenings. As a result of talking to the luncheon clubs, front page newspaper stories and editorials appeared in the daily papers, pointing out that sanitation is a way of man living with man, that it is tangible to all of us, and that everyone had a responsibility in his or her community. Many times you have wished for front
page stories regarding a sanitation activity. In this case we had the front page stories without asking for them, and the newspaper pointed the finger to all of its readers emphasizing the benefits a sanitation program could bring them. The big difference in this approach was that we did not talk about rats, garbage cans, or dumps. We talked about sanitation in terms of beauty, security, moral value, cleanliness and dollar value. In the Springfield daily paper there appeared an editorial on moral sanitation. The approach to the county health department units was again the positive approach, the health commissioner taking the material over to the principal of the high school and the principal suggesting that the material was good as theme writing material in the English classes. Thus, themes were written in the high school on sanitation. The art classes picked up the posters and started to reproduce them; the Chamber of Commerce showed interest in a clean-up campaign, and as a result of making sanitation tangible to all the people in terms of their daily living habits, a clean-up campaign was started by the ministers of the town preaching in the pulpits on Sunday morning that “Sanitation Is Next to Godliness.” Many in this group who are steeped in research activities may somewhat discount the value of this type of publicity. However, I am trying to emphasize the particular need for more understanding by the public of what we are trying to do. I am also urging that we make it possible for the public to participate in the field of sanitation. I think we must all admit that in order to have more financial support for sanitation we must have better public understanding of our programs. A positive approach to sanitation, making the subject pleasant for the people in the community to work with, will do much to turn the subject into a parlor story and not have it looked at as an undesirable subject for conversation.

**New Emphasis**

One might ask why we do not use the terms health and sanitation without bringing in other subjects such as beauty. We have found by surveying the public that they are not interested in garbage cans, even if they are clean. They are not interested in dumps or sanitation fill method, even if kept the cleanest of clean. They are not interested in sewage disposal plants even if they are shrugged from beginning to end. The public tells us that they just don’t care to be associated with any subject which deals directly with insanitary conditions. Therefore, our attention was turned to a positive approach in sanitation, bringing to this bigger percentage of the population things that they themselves are reaching for every hour of their daily routine of living.

**Beauty**—It is hard to visualize a beautiful city, a beautiful home, or a beautiful person unless that city, home or person is clean, or sanitary. Beauty can definitely be linked to sanitation, and I am sure that the average man understands or has a meaning for the word beauty better than he has for the word sanitation.

**Security**—In the average home, the question of the family health, and particularly the health of the breadwinner of the family, is important so far as security for that family is concerned.

**Cleanliness**—Sanitation in the factory or in the home certainly can be definitely associated with security in terms of absenteeism in the plant and better living conditions in the home.

**Dollar value**—One has only to talk to the real estate man, not in terms of bacteria counts, but in terms of what happens to property values in a neighborhood when the neighborhood becomes dirty and insanitary.

**Social relations**—Public relations—a term that is very tangible to industry, organized groups, and to the individual. Nothing is more fundamental to better social relationships than cleanliness, and I would like to say that we have
used the term “cleanliness” with the individual and the word “sanitation” in terms of the community. Cleanliness certainly is a word that is understood by industry and the public, and sanitation is a word with which they are very much confused. In many cases they associate sanitation only with the slum areas of the community.

We have had several meetings in Ann Arbor recently, and we have talked in great detail with a number of people from industry on how to help industry better understand sanitation programs in the United States. We are convinced that in thus presenting the positive side of the entire question of sanitation that industry is far more interested in sanitation than ever before, that they are more willing to participate in the program and that they associate it with themselves personally, and not just as an activity of their particular company.

We must not forget the need for proper ordinances in the field of sanitation and adequate research to bring forth the facts in the field. However, the question of a proper approach in selling, promoting or educating the public on the subject of sanitation is just as important as ordinances and research. Sanitation in the over-all public health picture is not something which is on the way out. The true benefits of a better American standard of living through sanitation have not even been touched as yet in this country. Sanitation has unlimited possibilities if you will only picture it as a way of life in true American fashion.

We must not forget the pioneer work that has been carried on in the early history of sanitation and the tremendous load which is being carried by the sanitation people today to have our country recognized as the most sanitation-conscious nation in the world. But we must look into the future and be honest about the responsibilities which face us in this field. We no longer have the challenge of typhoid, but we do have the challenge of stepping along with progress such as changing from the mere absence of disease to the development of positive health. Leadership must be shown by giving recognition to the entire field of environmental sanitation rather than to merely segments of it. The responsibility for the entire field of environmental sanitation will be accepted by some individuals and groups in this country. Certainly the public health sanitation people should face this responsibility which has been theirs for many years. We must realize also that the lay individual is interested, if only we will carry the story to him in terms that he can understand. While the problems in the sick area of sanitation must be answered, we owe it to ourselves to bring the sanitation story to all the people and reap the benefits which sanitation so rightfully deserves by having a preventive program of sanitation operating in the well areas of society.

**Coordinated National Program**

Why a nation-wide sanitation program? First to make sanitation tangible to the people, to encourage health agencies to lead sanitation towards uniformity, to change emphasis from the absence of disease to the presence of health; and second, to remove the present stigma that exists in the minds of people that sanitation is a law, that sanitation deals only with filth, that sanitation cannot be discussed in polite society; and third to bring to all people the thought that sanitation is a part of their daily living habits, and to present the positive values of a healthful environment. This program brings to the sanitarian recognition and the dignity that his profession rightfully deserves.

The sanitation personnel should not feel that sanitation is a minor activity of a health department. It can be a major one. Also, in presenting sanitation with a positive approach to all the people, every citizen in this country can be made conscious of the fact that sanitation is and should be an important part of his daily living habits. As the public realizes the importance of
sanitation, so will they realize the importance of monies in sanitation budgets. Sometimes we hesitate to mention the word salaries, but salaries are as important to the sanitation people as they are to any one else, and not until sanitation is recognized and respected by the public will the people in this profession be given proper recognition. A nation-wide sanitation program should not only bring recognition to sanitation as a profession and the true worth of sanitation to the public, but it should also bring a uniformity in approach in the sanitation field.

Many of us have often heard the following rather similar questions posed:

(1) Is Sanitation a profession, and if it is, what are we doing to give it professional status?

(2) Are we so buried in techniques that we cannot see the forest for the trees?

(3) What is the status of the sanitarian in the eyes of the public?—of the official agency?

(4) What is the future of sanitation in this country, and what is the future of the sanitarian?

(5) Why is the sanitation budget in a good many instances not a major part of the health department budget, and why is the salary of the sanitarian lower than that of an electrical worker?

(6) What does the health officer in the local community really think of the sanitarian?

(7) How much does the public appreciate the subject of sanitation or know the relations it has to daily living habits?

Answers to many of these questions can be found in a nation-wide sanitation program, and the people in sanitation certainly owe it to themselves to take full advantage of the opportunities that the field of sanitation offers.

Following the pattern of many other organizations in this country, we suggest the positive approach of sanitation with the focal point of education in the home. Today in the United States we are living somewhat the same as the Indians who were here one hundred years ago. When filth and dirt around their wigwams got to the point where they could no longer stand it, they moved their wigwams to higher ground. Today, in this country, we are doing somewhat the same thing. We are still moving up on Knob Hill and we are somewhat proud to tell our friends that we do not live on the other side of the tracks but that we live in this new area. We then are moving away from filth the same as the Indians did one hundred years ago. Certainly we should make use of what we know—we should face the facts, and we should properly practice sanitation in all its ramifications, which means that all the people should be interested in sanitation. The only way that they can be interested is for them to understand it, and if they are to understand sanitation we must talk to them about sanitation in terms which they can understand.

The majority of people in the United States await an understandable story on this subject. We as sanitation people should answer that challenge and make sanitation tangible to everyone and again establish it as the backbone of public health. Leadership is needed. The challenge for a better American standard of living through sanitation awaits you as an individual, you as a sanitarian, and you as part of this great organization.