

IBP HUMAN ADAPTABILITY NEW GUINEA PROJECT

Report on an ad hoc meeting in Canberra

26th August, 1971

At an ad hoc meeting convened by Professor R.J. Walsh and held in the Australian Academy of Science on 26th August, 1971.

Present: Professor R.J. Walsh (Chairman)
Dr. G.M. Budd
Dr. J.E. Cotes
Dr. J.V.G.A. Durnin
Dr. R.H. Fox
Mr. R.G. Harvey
Dr. R.W.J. Keay
Dr. P. Sinnett
Professor J.S. Weiner
Professor H.M. Whyte

1. Progress in working up results

Professor Walsh congratulated Dr. Cotes, Dr. Durnin, Dr. Fox and Professor Weiner on their contributions to the Man in the Pacific symposium of the Pacific Science Congress, and on the good progress in working up the data on nutrition, work capacity and thermal tolerance from the New Guinea joint project. He regretted that the work on anthropometry, demography, genetics and health status was not so far advanced. He said that there had been some delay in obtaining analyses from Dr. Mourant who had, however, now agreed to send photocopies of all results to Dr. Booth in Canberra; the genetic marker data would be analysed in Australia.

2. Data Centre

Professor Walsh and Professor Whyte explained that the proposals for the data centre, which had been agreed in correspondence with Sir Lindor Brown, would have to be modified particularly because of Dr. Sinnett's appointment to a Chair in Port Moresby and the need to find a replacement for Dr. van de Kaa. Dr. Sinnett said that inter-related files were needed for each subject; he had received anthropometric data from Mr. Harvey but was awaiting the demographic data. Dr. Hornabrook had done some checking, but all the data needed to be corrected as some errors had been detected, and the data from Lufa appeared to have been mislaid. However, Professor Walsh, Professor Whyte and Dr. Sinnett would soon be going to New Guinea and would be able to search for the missing data with Dr. Hornabrook. Dr. Fox asked when the data centre would be ready to handle the U.K. data and in reply Dr. Sinnett referred to the importance of preparing the basic files and to the problems encountered in so doing. Professor Whyte said the U.K. data could not be handled until the demographic files were complete and he stressed the importance of submitting fully checked data. He also urged that great care be taken in framing good questions for inter-group analyses. Dr. W. Craig would continue to programme the work at the John Curtin School under the general guidance of Mr. Kinns. Dr. Sinnett mentioned that Mrs. Keig could assist on a part-time basis. In summing up the discussion Professor Walsh said the Australian group with the support of the Australian National University, would deal with the data centre problems and would arrange for a new demographer to be appointed.

3. Publication of results

Professor Walsh thought that prime publication of the separate studies should be by the individual workers in journals of their choice. Some thought was, however, also being given to a suggestion that some of the papers presented at the Man in the Pacific Symposium (including those by Cotes, Durnin, Fox and Weiner) should be published in a special issue of Human Biology in Oceania. He had in mind summaries of 2-3 printed pages for each paper. Dr. Cotes and Dr. Durnin warned that some primary journals were unwilling to publish papers which had been previously published in summary form elsewhere. Professor Weiner mentioned that some previous IBP/HA papers by U.K. workers had been published in the Transactions of the Royal Society which seemed appropriate for projects supported by the Society.

Dr. Keay referred to the proposal for a Royal Society discussion meeting to which Professor Walsh would be invited; he suggested that funds available for the meeting might be up to about £1200. Publication in either the Proceedings or the Transactions of the Royal Society might follow, and the possibility of a joint Royal Society/Australian Academy of Science publication might be explored. Professor Weiner referred to the plan for publication of a series of IBP volumes by the Cambridge University Press and suggested that the work in New Guinea might be covered by a 'case study' of 40-50 pages with a full list of published papers. Professor Whyte urged that publication of new work in specialized journals should not be held up pending publication of an integrated series of papers. The possibility of eventually binding together separately published papers was also mentioned.

The proposal for a Royal Society discussion meeting late in 1972 was warmly supported and Professor Walsh said he would be glad to come to London for it. It was however agreed that the question of publication should be kept separate.

4. Integration of results

The original proposal for a monograph which would integrate all the studies was discussed and the difficulties in achieving such an aim were recognized. Dr. Cotes said there would be some integration of the results obtained by the U.K. researchers. Professor Walsh invited Mr. Harvey to consider undertaking this task in association with Dr. Sinnett and he agreed to consider the suggestion.