

**Mr J. Nittel**

**Representative of his Excellency the Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences**

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

The care of people with disturbed hearing lies in the field of activity of the mental and physical public health authorities. In our school system provisions have been made for the education of pupils who are deaf or whose hearing is impaired. In the universities research into hearing disturbances occupies an important place. As your congress is mainly concerned with scientific research, it seems quite understandable that the Organizing Committee has asked the Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences for financial support. The committee has also requested the Minister to inaugurate the Congress. Owing to absence abroad, the Minister is, to his regret, prevented from doing so, and I have been asked to take over this task.

Audiological care in the Netherlands is given in the first place by the ear-, nose- and throat specialists, in the second place by the audiological centres, in the third place by the institutes and schools for the deaf, and the schools for children with impaired hearing and also by private societies for people with impaired hearing.

In general we may say that many people suffering from impaired hearing can be treated by the ear specialist. In future not every ear specialist will be able to give the necessary assistance. According to modern standards, the treatment of patients suffering from impaired hearing often demands too extensive care. If the ear specialist cannot give enough help with the equipment and the assistants at his disposal, then it is up to him to refer the patient to an audiological centre. In the Netherlands there are at present five well equipped audiological centres attached to the Universities. Besides, there are a number of good private centres. In this way there are audiological centres all over the country.

The Institutes for the Deaf, with the schools for the deaf attached to them, and the schools for children with impaired hearing take up an important place in the care for the child with hearing disturbances. There are five Institutes for the Deaf. In 1956 seven schools for the deaf were attached to these institutes, and now eleven. The number of schools for children affected with impaired hearing has also risen considerably. In 1956 there were eight schools for children with impaired hearing, now there are sixteen.

The observations made in the audiological centres provide the opportunity

to detect hearing disturbances at an early stage and to determine the most desirable kind of education. In this connection the work of the school medical officers for the detection of hearing disturbances should also be mentioned.

The private Societies for children and adults suffering from impaired hearing founded on their own initiative, accomplish an important task in rehabilitation. They are of special help to people of impaired hearing in overcoming the social consequences of their deafness.

In the whole of these arrangements, the task of the centres at the Universities is to promote fundamental research in the field under consideration.

Audiological is still a young science but, I think, the Dutch Universities have not neglected this science in the Netherlands. I hope that the work done in the Dutch Universities may prove to be of some value for the further development of this science.

Your Congress will undoubtedly contribute to the development of this young but important science.

The list of members guarantees that the discussions will be of a high scientific standard. It is greatly appreciated that Prof. Von Békésy, Nobel prize winner for medicine in 1961, participates in your Congress.

With the wish that this meeting may be successful in all respects I declare the Sixth International Congress of Audiology open.