Opening remarks

E. G. J. OLSEN
M.D., M.R.C. Path.

THIS is the first meeting which has been organized to bring together all members of the Multicentre Research Project on Congestive Cardiomyopathy and, with the exception of the Australian centre, members from each centre have been able to attend.

The dilated form of cardiomyopathy, congestive cardiomyopathy, masquerades under a variety of terms and appears to be of world-wide distribution. Numerous aetiological agents, still unproved, or often as yet unsuspected, may determine the same result: intractable heart failure.

The object of the Multicentre Research Project is to study the epidemiology and natural history of this type of cardiomyopathy in the hope of determining the pathogenesis. Almost nothing is known of the natural history, because of a probable long period of latency, during which symptoms are absent. In order to detect the pre-symptomatic stage and to conduct follow-up studies, long-term investigations are required.

The project is designed to study the natural history by clinically examining and continuing to observe groups of apparently normal individuals in order to elucidate possible causes, for example, high blood pressure, high alcoholic intake, virus infections or immunological idiosyncrasy. Patients with established

signs and symptoms of the dilated form of cardiomyopathy will also be examined by non-invasive and invasive techniques. Biopsy material will be examined morphologically, biochemically and immunologically. All investigations will be conducted along uniform lines and the data will be centralized. By these various means it is hoped to find the cause or causes of dilated cardiomyopathy. Once these are known, curative treatment will follow.

This meeting has been arranged under the auspices of the International Society and Federation of Cardiology, and money has been made available to initiate this project. As the participating centres are distributed throughout the world, to organize this workshop additional funds had to be sought. ICI came to our aid, and their generous financial support is gratefully acknowledged.

The proceedings of the meeting are printed in the succeeding pages; both the formal presentations of data as well as the unabridged discussions, have been included. The date of the workshop was arranged to coincide with a meeting of the Executive Board of the International Society and Federation of Cardiology, which was being held in London at that time.