

## OPENING SESSION

TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 15

*Chairman*—MALCOLM ROSS, Editor, University of Miami Publications, Coral Gables, Florida.

### **Welcoming Address By I. D. MacVicar**

Mr. Hugh Peters, our chairman, has been prevented from attending the opening of this conference by other county business that could not be postponed. He has asked me to express his regrets and to extend to you, on behalf of the people of Dade County, a cordial and hearty welcome.

It is a great pleasure to welcome to Dade County the Second Annual Session of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute. We congratulate the Marine Laboratory of the University of Miami for presenting the Inaugural Sessions here in August of last year. At that time the future of the Institute depended, in large measure, upon the interest taken in that first program. A gratifying result is the fine attendance at this, the Second Session.

The first Institute brought together representatives of the sports fishermen, commercial fishermen, fishery biologists, technologists, economists and conservation officials. That Inaugural Session truly embraced the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries, as almost every county and state bordering on these waters was represented. Our own Federal government sent top-level scientists and administrators. The success of the Institute was thus assured from the outset by such participation.

One of your speakers last year stated that salt-water sports fishing alone was valued at \$625,000,000.00 in 1947, and the entire industry at almost one billion dollars. That is no fish story, gentlemen, but a statement of fact—a statement that emphasizes the importance of the fishing industry to the economy of all Caribbean countries.

Those of us who have lived in Florida for many years are fully conscious of the almost irreparable damage that has been done to our marine life by some irresponsible developers and promoters. Perhaps we can never reclaim the beauty and plenty of the old days, but if there is one chance left, it will rest in capable hands such as yours. Our governing bodies will do well to heed your counsel and welcome your recommendations. Therein lies the only hope of preserving and protecting marine resources that mean so much to all of us.

In that connection, I should like to report that a Dade County Aquarium and Marine Laboratory on Virginia Key is not by any means a dead issue. It is true our first financing plan was not successful, as the private interests withdrew after forfeiting \$50,000.00 to the County. This money has been deposited in a special aquarium fund, and the Board of County Commissioners is now working on a plan that we have every reason to believe will be successful. Under this plan the County will own and operate the Aquarium instead of leasing to private interests. It is our intention to construct a Marine Laboratory for the University of Miami, at no cost to the University, and it is our hope that the staff of the Marine Laboratory will, in turn, help us with the technical operation of the Aquarium. We have given top priority to this project and hope that by the

time you hold your next annual meeting, construction will be well under way.

I trust your meeting here will be the success it deserves to be, and that your stay in Dade County will be such a pleasant one that you will return again and again to our shores.

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