The Léon Bernard Foundation Committee met on 23 January 1964, in conformity with the Statutes of the Léon Bernard Foundation, to propose to the Seventeenth World Health Assembly a candidate for the award of the Léon Bernard Foundation Prize in 1964.

The Committee noted the replies received from governments to the Director-General's circular letter of 22 May 1963, requesting nominations, and examined in detail the documentation provided to support candidatures.

The Committee was greatly impressed by the exceptional merit of all the candidates, by their high scientific qualifications and their contribution to the advance of medical science and the alleviation of human suffering.

Professor J. de Castro proposed the nomination of Professor Robert Debré and the Committee decided unanimously to recommend to the World Health Assembly that the Léon Bernard Foundation Prize be awarded in 1964 to Professor Robert Debré in recognition of his outstanding contribution and practical achievements in the field of social medicine.

In the course of his long career Professor Robert Debré has been first and foremost a doctor conscious of the many aspects of medical science. He gave his preference to paediatrics and his work as a clinician in this field has been very important, covering the whole range of children's diseases. Infantile tuberculosis, in which he was interested from the outset, with his master Léon Bernard, and more recently rheumatic fever and poliomyelitis, are only a few of the principal subjects of his studies.

Members: Dr B. D. B. Layton (Chairman), Dr A. C. Andriamasy, Professor F. Widy-Wirski, Professor J. de Castro, Professor J. García Orcoyen.
However, Professor Robert Debré realized at a very early stage that the role of the clinician acquires its full importance only within the framework of a wider conception of disease, its origins and its social consequences. He was one of the first, with Albert Calmette, to study the effects of BCG on children; he took a leading part in organizing the family placement of babies born to tuberculous mothers, and later on he made full use of all the possibilities of the newly discovered chemical agents, not only for the treatment of the disease but also for tuberculosis control in the community. He was also interested in vaccination against diphtheria with toxoid, the prevention of cardiac complications in rheumatic fever and the prevention of poliomyelitis, as well as the treatment and re-education of poliomyelitic children.

Professor Robert Debré has devoted a considerable part of his activities to research, especially in the field of microbiology which he taught, moreover, for several years at the Medical Faculty, University of Paris. Thanks to him, the laboratories attached to the hospital departments for which he was responsible, expanded on an exceptional scale. As professor of clinical paediatrics in the Children's Hospital, Paris, he attained the pinnacle of his university career and it is in this capacity that he has exercised all his influence as a teacher. He has trained in clinical and social paediatrics, generations of doctors in France and from many other countries. In recent years he has been the moving spirit behind the reform of medical studies in France.

Professor Debré has been active in the field of international health ever since the days of the League of Nations Health Organization. As representative of France on the Executive Board of UNICEF, he has played an important part in the promotion of child health all over the world. Thus, under the joint auspices of UNICEF and the French Government, he created the International Children's Centre. As member and chairman of the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy, he has endeavoured in particular to promote mass campaigns against certain communicable diseases.

Professor Robert Debré has always considered that his task as a doctor forms part of a wider mission. Never, at any time in his career, has he felt that medicine can be separated from social action. His activities as a research worker, clinician and teacher have been animated by an ever-increasing effort for the promotion of social medicine and hygiene.