

APPENDIX D

ECONOMIC LOSS CAUSED BY NEGLECT OF PUBLIC HEALTH*

On this continent exponents of preventive medicine have recognized the handwriting on the wall and are looking and hoping for a national organization of health, in order that we may efficiently accomplish in the future that which we have in a sense only been touching the fringe of in the past. But this cannot be accomplished without the expenditure of large sums of money and, in order to obtain this money, we must be in a position to show that the expenditure is warranted. Gladstone once said—"In the health of the people lies the strength of the nation." It is a recognized fact that on the efficient solution of the problems of public health depends the comfort and prosperity of our peoples and the future greatness of our nations. But, unfortunately, our civilization has not sufficiently advanced for us to appeal for this on humane grounds alone, therefore, we have to present the economic side of the problem in cold figures of dollars and cents. For this purpose probably the most valuable and most reliable records we have are contained in the *Report of the Committee of One Hundred on National Health*, dealing with the national vitality and setting forth its waste and conservation, as prepared by Prof. Irving Fisher, of Yale. From this report we learn that there are 3,000,000 persons in the United States at all times suffering from some form of sickness (equal to approximately 300,000 in Canada), of whom about 1,100,000 are in the working period of life, three-quarters being actual workers, who must lose at least \$700 per year, making an aggregate loss from illness of \$550,000,000. The expense of medicine, medical attendance, extra foods, etc., would equal this amount; thus, we have the total cost of illness as approximately \$1,100,000,000, of which it is assumed that at least one-half is preventable. The annual loss from preventable deaths has been conservatively estimated at \$1,100,000,000. If to this we add the \$550,000,000 loss from preventable sickness, we have a total of \$1,650,000,000 as the approximate annual monetary loss to these two nations from preventable sickness and death, and these figures are considered by practical and reliable authorities as extremely conservative. Furthermore, no attempt is made here at estimating the loss from the after effects of many of these diseases, that oft times leave the victim handicapped for the balance of his life; no attempt is made to estimate what this enormous amount means in human blood, in agony, pain, sorrow and tears; nor the loss

* Extract from article by Dr. Chas. J. Hastings M.D., L.R.C.P.I., Medical Officer of Health, Toronto, in *Conservation of Life*, July, 1917.