

MONTREAL ANTI-TUBERCULOSIS AND GENERAL HEALTH LEAGUE

Address of the Chairman, Sir Arthur W. Currie, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., LL.D.

Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the League, held on March 15th, 1927

At our last annual meeting, I took occasion, as your chairman, to bring to your attention the possibilities which await Montreal in the reduction of the incidence and mortality from the ever-increasing list of preventable diseases. I pointed out that at least two thousand deaths and twenty-thousand cases of acute illness could be prevented each year.

In seeking the cause of Montreal's high death rate from preventable diseases, one naturally asks what are the steps which can be taken to prevent disease, what has been the experience elsewhere and what are we doing here. We learn that there are certain fundamental steps which may be taken by any community to prevent disease. We find that where these steps have been taken, they have given uniformly satisfactory results, as evidenced by a lower death rate.

Some years ago, Sir Arthur Newsholme wrote:- "Infant Mortality is the most sensitive index we possess of social welfare and of sanitary administration, especially under urban conditions". This statement is equally true today, because infant mortality responds quickly to changes in the sanitary, social and economic conditions. Such being the case, our infant death rate is the best indicator of our progress or lack of progress, and I will refer to it for this purpose.

We find that the rate of our infant mortality has decreased during the past years. From this we judge that general health conditions have improved. This we would expect, because during these years our water supply has been safeguarded, and an ever-increasing amount of our milk supply has been made safe by inspection and pasteurization. The health department has grown and the voluntary health agencies have done good, if limited, pieces of work. If this progress had been at the same rate and on a par