

but I am sure that you will agree with me that we are morally obligated to extend our efforts on their behalf.

Another development worthy of note on the home front is the continuing decline in the infant and maternal mortality rates. I have already touched on this matter in the broadcast I made last Saturday at the opening of "Health Week", but the subject is one which must give us all such lively satisfaction that I should like to refer to it again briefly.

If one looks back to 1921, immediately after the first World War, statistics show that out of every thousand live births in Canada, 102 infants died within their first year of life. Since then each year's figures have shown a fairly constant improvement until in 1945 the rate fell to an all-time low of 51. Contrasted with 1944, this was an eight per cent improvement, or, to put it more graphically still, this fall in the infant mortality rate means that under present conditions 1,100 Canadian babies are now alive who a year before would not have lived to their first birthday.

The figures I have cited are the national average. While a considerable improvement has been achieved by our joint efforts, in certain other countries the average rate is lower. That we can better these figures is shown by the fact that some Canadian cities have already achieved a lower rate than the national average.

Canada compares somewhat more favorably in the matter of deaths of mothers. The rate there has fallen from 4.2 deaths of mothers per thousand live births in 1939 to 2.3 in 1945. This is equal to the record in the United States and lower than that in Great Britain and Australia.

The reasons for this steady improvement are several. In the first place, the medical profession in Canada has given service second to none. If I might digress here for a moment, I should like to add my word of tribute for their devotion to duty, particularly during the war years, when those who remained at home had to shoulder so many extra burdens and those who served in the medical corps were called upon to make so many sacrifices.

A second factor in reducing our maternal and infant mortality rates is the fact that increasingly large numbers of babies are being born in hospitals. The experienced and expert care provided -- again in spite of staff shortages -- and the availability of the latest medical facilities have undoubtedly contributed to our improved record. A third factor is the cumulative result of educational work carried out both by government departments and private agencies on the many phases of pre-natal and post-natal care.

In this connection I must pay tribute to the generous spirit of co-operation that has existed between municipal, provincial and federal governments, and private groups working in the field of public health. The progress that has been made is largely the fruit of that co-operation and is an indication of what can be done in the future. Provincial and municipal departments of health together with associations such as yours have worked with my own department in raising the standards of public health in Canada.

No later than last week another significant advance in public health was made with the organization of the National Cancer Institute of Canada. In the conference which preceded formation of this group, practically every phase of the cancer problem was touched upon, but the emphasis throughout was on research to find the cause or causes of this mysterious malady. With a central organization to act as a clearing house for all the latest information on every phase of cancer control, we are now in a much better position than we were even ten days ago to explore every possible avenue of action against this dread disease.