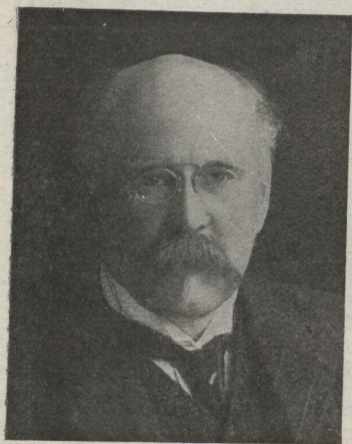


FOR THE HEALTH OF CANADA

Proof of this Country's Need of a National Laboratory

By M. J. PATTON

A LONG narrow room on the third storey of a commercial building in Ottawa, two long narrow tables placed end to end in that room and a distinguished company of medical men around those tables, with a man big in finance, but bigger in public spirit, at the head of



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Who is head of the committee that looks after the health of Canada.

the head table, is what a prying body might have seen some time ago had he climbed up the fire escape and peeped in at the window. The place was the offices of the Commission of Conservation; the distinguished company of medical men was the public health officials of the Dominion and Provincial Governments and the big man presiding over the meeting was E. B. Osler, Chairman of the

Public Health Committee of the Commission of Conservation. These men, many of whom had spent no small part of their lives in public health work, had gathered there from the Atlantic to the Pacific, at the call of the Commission of Conservation to grapple with the growing health problems of a growing nation—problems that had grown too big for old methods and demanded better organization and improved facilities for their solution. They deliberated on numerous questions ranging all the way from tuberculosis to vital statistics, and they made various recommendations to both Dominion and Provincial Governments for the better safeguarding of the health of Canada. The first concrete result of their action—and one of the most important—was announced recently when it was given out that the Dominion Government had approved of the recommendation of the Conference to establish a National Laboratory and an advisory Central Council of Health.

It is surprising when one comes to think over it, how badly Canada needs a national laboratory. We have a Health of Animals Branch under the Department of Agriculture, equipped with a laboratory and manned by skilled officials, to look after the health of the cattle and pigs of the country, but somehow or other, in our anxiety to raise cattle and pigs, we have overlooked the need of a national laboratory for human beings. And yet, the need for it is very great. Last year in Ontario there was an epidemic of rabies and many of the unfortunates who chanced to be bitten had to be bundled off in haste to New York for treatment. Then, too, we are dependent on the United States for all our vaccines, anti-toxins and sera for treating such diseases as small-pox, diphtheria, meningitis and lock-jaw.

What makes matters worse is that the biological products we get from Uncle Sam are often of poor quality or deficient in strength. All such products when sold in the United States must come up to a standard of purity and strength set by law. Here, our Government adopts no such standard whatever. The result is that the United States laboratories can sell their inferior product in Canada without fear of prosecution, and the Canadian public has to pay and suffer. And yet we pay big prices to the United States laboratories for these materials. For instance, it costs about 50 cents a dose to manufacture diphtheria anti-toxin in New York State, while the retail price is quoted by the leading American producer at \$7.50. It costs about \$25 for a treatment of tetanus anti-toxin, although the Department of Health of New York manufacture the required dose at a cost of 60 cents. Estimating the annual consumption of diphtheria anti-toxin in Canada at 6,000 doses, the total cost at the retail price quoted above would be \$45,000, while the actual cost of manufacture would be \$3,000. In this item alone, a national laboratory, by supplying anti-toxin at cost, would save the people of Canada \$40,000 annually. By instituting a system of inspection of all these biological products so as to insure that they were of the requisite standard of

purity and strength, it would be doing a service, the value of which must be estimated, not in dollars and cents, but in human lives.

The manufacture and inspection of these medical necessities is only one of the many ways in which a national laboratory would serve the public. We have grown so rapidly in population that our public health problems have multiplied apace. With small cities and a sparse population, health administration was comparatively simple. Now all that is changed. How often do we notice in the press of the larger cities, the admonition of the health officer, "Boil your drinking water." Population on the banks of our rivers and lakes has increased rapidly, and the result has been dangerous pollution of the water supply of places further down. Our death-rate from typhoid fever shows how serious this danger is. According to the last census 35.5 people out of every 100,000 is the yearly death-rate in Canada from typhoid fever. In Germany the death-rate from this disease is 7.6, while in Scotland it is only 6.2. Surely there is need for trained investigators under national control and unprejudiced by local or provincial considerations.

Then there is the housing problem. We have been in the habit of saying there were no slums in Canada. But we must face the facts. We have slums, and the grasping real estate speculator is making more every day. Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, Ottawa and Winnipeg have slums, in many cases of the most aggravated form. These are veritable plague spots of disease, especially of tuberculosis. Yet a city does not like to have the fact pointed out that it does not house its people properly. These conditions incident to the crowding together of people in centres of population must be investigated and remedied, and it is clear that this must be done by a national investigator free from local influence.

THERE are many other questions that the officials of a national laboratory would have to attack. Industrial diseases are increasing with the extension of the manufacturing interests of the country. The supervision of the preparation and sale of foods and drinks is a vital question, and there is a wide field of research open in connection with cancer and tuberculosis. It is the hope of those instrumental in promoting the institution that it will be a centre for such medical research work as can be carried on efficiently only in such an institution.

Complementary to the establishment of a national laboratory is the creation of a national council of health. This will assemble at least annually at the call of the Commission of Conservation and will be composed of Dominion and Provincial Government officials engaged in public health work. It will thus act as a great co-ordinating force in health administration. This is exceedingly important because the problems of public health are interprovincial or even international in character. This can be best seen in connection with the question of water supplies for towns and cities. Growing Alberta towns deposit their sewage into streams from which Saskatchewan centres procure their supply; Winnipeg pours its filth into the Red River to plague Selkirk; Sarnia mixes its refuse with the water supply of Windsor and Detroit; the town of Aylmer pollutes the water supply of Ottawa, which, in turn, contaminates the water that Montreal drinks. A national council of health on which every province is represented is the only means by which these interprovincial problems can be expeditiously solved; for while it is a point in dispute as to whether the British North America Act gives the administration of public health exclusively to the provinces, it cannot be gainsaid that these latter have shouldered that work.

THE Council will also have an important role to play in harmonizing the provincial health laws that are in conflict with one another, and in acting in an advisory capacity to federal, provincial and municipal health authorities. It is expected to point out the branches of work that can be best administered by each of these three, to determine what work shall be conducted in the national or other public laboratories and to advise as to what steps shall be taken in the case of the outbreak of epidemics of disease, either in Canada or in contiguous countries. In short, it is a general advisory body on all the large questions of public health.

It is seemly and fitting that the first step towards coping with the public health problems of a grow-

ing country should be the establishment of a national laboratory and the creation of a representative advisory council. Thus we are making provision for co-operation of the constituent elements of the country where co-operation is absolutely essential, and we also are providing means for finding out just what the conditions of our national health is. We must provide means for the correct diagnosis of our national ills and plague spots before we can make substantial progress towards their cure.

Regulating Corporations

BY COUPON.

JUST at the time when so many Canadians are remarking about the great difference in the conditions that now prevail in Canada as compared with what is taking place in the United States, along comes a New York paper with the interesting observation that as far as the enjoyment of liberty is concerned in respect to corporation matters, the United States has had all that Canada is now enjoying. That paper states that the time is sure to come when attacks on various Canadian corporation will occur somewhat along the lines that are being witnessed with regard to a number of the larger American industrial consolidations. Anybody who figures it out will readily appreciate that while the Government itself is responsible for the majority of consolidations, because of the tariff assistance which it is affording various lines of industry, still there will come a time when other governments will look askance on what is being allowed at the present time, and will see to it that considerably more binding regulations shall be applied to consolidations.

Such a condition naturally occasions an important question—at what period of consolidation's existence should a government step in to regulate it? The right time is when the insiders, who have brought about such conditions, are still loaded up with the securities because, while insiders are great believers in the possibilities of various lines of business, still they are never so greatly interested but that they see that they are able to make a very ready market for their securities, and gradually spread them out into the hands of tens of thousands of investors.

The present attack on the United States Steel Corporation by the United States Government affords an interesting illustration of the foregoing, for at the present time, when the company has been attacked, its securities are being held by between 350,000 to 400,000 shareholders all over the world, and the big group of men who were primarily responsible for the colossal consolidation are comparatively small holders, as compared with what they held at the time the big deal was put through. The same thing would apply to Canadian consolidations. Were the Government to step in now and make an investigation and endeavour to place things on a somewhat better basis, it would be found that to a very large extent the insiders still have the bulk of their holdings, but it does not take any clever market follower to discern that movements that have been occurring on the Canadian markets for some time past indicate that determined efforts are being made to create an attractive market, and in this way effect distribution of stocks among small investors. In a sense the United States Government might be held absolutely responsible for the condition that exists as regards the corporate interests to-day, and either they should never have allowed them to do what they have done, or they should not be stepping in and trying to deprive them of all the rights which they gave them some years ago.

Parliament Classified.

LAWYERS, as usual, predominate in Canada's new parliament. The following table shows the calling or occupation of the members of the new as well as the old House:

	1911.	1908.
Merchants	27	31
Capitalists	2	7
Lawyers	75	75
Farmers	32	31
Doctors	18	22
Journalists	10	10
Manufacturers	13	12
Agents	8	8
Brokers	5	2
Students	1	..
Druggists	1	..
Surveyors	1	..
Labour Employees	1	..
Contractors	9	2
Notaries	7	4
Lumbermen	11	7