

As the hon. member knows—and I say this in all humility, because I am not a medical man—there is not the same opportunity for fundamental research in the field of arthritis, so I am told, that there is in the field of cancer. In respect of arthritis the research may perhaps best be conducted along with clinical effort or with treatment effort, whereas in respect of cancer, while one should attack it from both the educational and the clinical point of view, perhaps its solution—and I say “perhaps”—lies in the field of fundamental research.

I take this opportunity, because it is the first I have had, to tell the committee what has been attempted in an effort to bring about the control of one of man's deadliest enemies, cancer. I found, shortly after I became minister, that my own feelings with regard to cancer had been seriously considered not only by my own officers but by my predecessor. There have been discussions in this house from time to time. Hon. gentlemen will recall one of our former members who sat not far from where the hon. member for Temiscouata (Mr. Pouliot) now sits and who since has died, a victim of cancer. One cannot help but recall the stirring appeals which he made to this house and nation. I must say that I resolved when I became Minister of National Health and Welfare that whatever energies I possessed would be employed at the outset in seeing if we could not in some way make sure that the instruments of war were made available to our research people and others in this country who might make a contribution in the control of cancer. I found that my predecessor had anticipated me considerably, because steps had already been taken to try to bring about some coordination of cancer control in Canada.

I found, on looking at some of the statistics, some of which have been referred to tonight by the hon. gentleman, that during the war, while we were fighting for decency and freedom, 35,000 of our young men and women died and during that same period 80,000 Canadians died from cancer. I note the following statistics:

	Deaths from cancer
1921 .....	6,153
1925 .....	7,153
1931 .....	9,578
1935 .....	11,156
1940 .....	13,322
1945 .....	14,450

So I say to all sides of the house that this is a problem which must engage our fullest attention. There are extenuating circumstances in these mortality rates which should be observed. The increase is due to two

[Mr. Martin.]

certain factors. First, the population of Canada has increased and, second, the proportion of older people in the Canadian population has become greater. But even if we take those factors into account, there appears to have been an increase of approximately nine per cent in the standardized cancer deathrate. If that trend continues—what I have noted by way of trend is true not only of Canada but of all countries in the world—and no external influences such as immigration or other unknown factors interfere, from now until 1960 some 220,000 people in this country will die of cancer. If the statistics persist in their consistency, 15,000 Canadians will die this year of this dreaded disease. There are some who find these facts repugnant and who think they should not be emphasized, but I am not one of those, nor is the government. We feel that we should face this situation frankly and see if we cannot address ourselves to the problem.

What were we to do? I sat down with my officials and discussed this matter the first day I was in the department. I put myself at their disposal and prepared to use professional knowledge. I was told then of some projects that my predecessor had in mind. I recognize that there is now on a regional basis in this country a great deal of work being done on cancer; I recognize that in Ontario, in Saskatchewan and in practically all provinces to a varying degree there is being done important work on the clinical, on the educational and, to a lesser extent, on the research side. There are centres in Ontario and Quebec particularly, where important research is being done.

There was no suggestion in our minds that these localized efforts to try to find an answer were not commendable; that was not in the thoughts of the Department of National Health and Welfare when we suggested to all provincial governments, to the representatives of the national research council, medical division; the Saskatchewan cancer commission; the Canadian cancer society; the Canadian medical association; the Canadian public health association; the Ontario cancer treatment and research foundation; the Manitoba cancer relief and research institute; the British Columbia cancer foundation, the medical faculties of the universities, that they should send their key men to a conference which was called on January 27 and 28 last here in Ottawa.

There was perhaps no legal authority to call that conference because, under the constitution, matters of health, except those referred to specifically in the British North America Act, came primarily under the provinces.