

External Affairs Supplementary Paper

No. 53/26 First National Report on Gamma Globulin

An address by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, Mr. Paul Martin, made to the 41st annual meeting of the Canadian Public Health Association, at Toronto, October 1, 1953.

The United Nations -- World Clinic

For the past year it has been my responsibility -- along with my colleague, our distinguished Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Pearson -- to represent Canada at the seventh session of the United Nations, which set itself the formidable task of achieving an honourable armistice in Korea. In our consultations with other member nations and in our deliberations around the conference table, it seemed to me that there was a direct parallel between our efforts to achieve peace and security throughout the world and what Canada's public health workers are doing every day to improve the health and well-being of this nation.

To me, the United Nations is a kind of "global clinic" which seeks out and deals with complex political, social and economic ills in an effort to restore health and security to a sick and troubled world.

The principles followed by the United Nations are much the same as those which guide the work of any good health clinic. First, and most important, its doors are always open to all who stand in need of its help. Secondly, it recognizes the necessity for getting all the facts before diagnosing the condition and prescribing treatment. Third, it stresses the value of prevention and seeks to eliminate the causes of conflict before trouble develops. Finally, it enlists the co-operation and support of members with varying and sometimes conflicting backgrounds, capacities and interests.

A recent example of co-operative action on an urgent health problem will illustrate how these same principles apply to public health work in Canada. I have in mind the prompt and effective marshalling of the nation's public health resources to help combat this summer's polio epidemic which assumed such serious proportions in some areas of Canada.

Gamma Globulin for Poliomyelitis

With the virtual elimination of diphtheria, whooping cough and smallpox as threats to the nation's health and with the very encouraging progress made in recent years in bringing tuberculosis under control, poliomyelitis has now assumed new prominence as a major public health problem in Canada. For personal reasons, this is a matter in which I have a particular interest.