

*State Medicine*

general, the women in particular know what doctors have done from the largest cities to the most remote lands.

Some doctors may find state medicine a gift of Providence. They may find practice too hard at times, the evenings too long, the profession in itself ungrateful, especially when the pay is small, in some instances nil. I have been through all that. It is sometimes hard, not only for the doctor, but for his family, and I might say, for his creditors also.

Though doctors have not been the only ones to suffer in this world, I think they have suffered more than any one in any other profession. But who in this world has never experienced want, in the different stages of physical or moral life? I do not wish to prove that necessities in life are to be absolutely forgotten. I only want to say that there is more in life than stingy personal interest, more than monetary or material considerations.

I said, sir, that private initiative could be greatly helped by public powers. This brings me to the last part of my remarks, to a suggestion I desire to be accepted in every part of this land. As a member of the Quebec legislative assembly I witnessed the birth of what are called the "health units." They represent in the highest degree the help that public authorities can obtain in promoting private medical initiative without the establishment of state medicine. They prove that state medicine is not needed to help us to perform wonders. Thirty-five units are under operation at the present time, and they certainly give satisfactory results. They are operating in rural districts, the cities having their clinics, dispensaries and so forth, subsidized by the provincial government. I know these organizations cannot be perfect; they are man-made. But they give the best results. I should say they are the most nearly perfect corps a province or a country could have.

They have met with strong criticism on the part of both the doctors and the public; but having proved themselves absolutely necessary they will, and as a matter of fact I believe they do, meet with general approval. The great utility of these units lies in the tracing and prevention of diseases and in the education of the general public by literature, clinics and lectures to mothers and children. The official doctors pay special attention to young mothers. Neither the doctors nor the nurses are allowed to practise. They have strict orders from the department to direct to his own family doctor anyone who needs care, and a sanitary inspector sees that the law is carried out in regard to public septic nuisances.

[Mr. Gauthier.]

In the territory covered by the units between eighty-five and ninety per cent of the children from birth to the age of five are immunized against diphtheria. Since the establishment of these health units, infant mortality has fallen from 200 to ninety per thousand births. The doctors who head the units have special degrees from the university of Toronto or the university of Baltimore.

What I have outlined here represents the results which have been obtained without state medicine. The spirit that led to the establishment of these units was the desire to help both doctors and public, and the proper functioning of the units is sure to accomplish the end in view. The Rockefeller Foundation gave wonderful financial assistance to the provincial government, and the people of the province are grateful to that institution. I have read in the press that the thirty-sixth health unit will be in operation in Drummondville on the first of May, and others shortly in Wolfe and Richmond counties. I am glad to see that the Quebec provincial Minister of Health is giving his attention to the establishment of these health units. I congratulate the provincial government upon its continuation of what was begun by the former government of the Hon. Mr. Taschereau.

I do not yet know what view our federal Minister of Health has on this question of state medicine; but I have absolute confidence in his judgment, and I believe that he will deal with the question from the standpoint of the interests of the Canadian people as a whole. I ask this chamber to examine the question thoroughly before urging upon the government the establishment of state medicine. State medicine may have a brilliant side, but it cannot replace the absolutely necessary links between the people and the medical art. I have dealt with but one side of the question, and that imperfectly. Others, I am sure, will present special arguments against the proposal for state medicine.

(Translation) After the efforts I have just made in the language of Shakespeare in order that all members of the house might understand the sole point that I wished to emphasize to-night, that is the moral aspect militating against the establishment of state medicine. I hope hon. members will carefully consider the system in force in the provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick. I remember quite well that at the birth of sanatory units in Quebec—and I see here a few of my former colleagues of the Legislative Assembly who can corroborate my statement—strong objections were heard from medical organizations and from the public.