

Despite the great contributions that have been made to the sum total of our knowledge of human behaviour by men like Pinel, Maudsley, Benjamin Rush, Kraepelin, Janet, Freud, Jung, Adler and others -- psychiatry and its related specialities is a comparatively new science. As such, it is still subject to misunderstanding, criticism, and sometimes even abuse. But there is growing evidence that psychiatry, as it reaches a greater state of maturity as a science, is not only increasing its capacity for service but is more clearly delineating for itself the scope -- and limits -- of its influence.

That psychiatry is aware of its broader responsibilities and of the need for taking account of those spiritual forces that are the mainspring of human conduct was well expressed in these words by one of Canada's outstanding leaders in the mental health field, Dr. Ewen Cameron:

"If we are to reach our greatest effectiveness as citizens and neighbours, it is no less essential that we should feel ourselves in historical continuity with the great ideals and objectives that have moved men from the earliest times".

Mental Health In An Uncertain World

I have suggested a number of considerations that might well be borne in mind in our future mental health planning. But the problems of mental health extend beyond the individual to the community, to the nation and to the world at large. This is reflected in the very theme of this Congress -- Mental Health in Public Affairs.

Mental illness has been described as a breakdown in living that may vary in degree from mild and temporary ineffectiveness to severe and complete incapacity. It seems to me that this definition has a particular relevance to the present condition of world affairs. Twice in our generation we have witnessed a breakdown in human relations that has resulted in armed conflict of the most far-reaching consequences.

Even today, in spite of all the miraculous advances in transportation and communication, the peoples of the world are still "islands shouting to each other across seas of misunderstanding." The tragedy of our time is that the world has become a neighbourhood, but men and women have not yet learned to live as neighbours.

We are now faced with the urgent problem of finding some formula by which the nations can live together in a wholesome, constructive and harmonious relationship. But there are formidable barriers to peaceful co-existence in the curtains that shut off from freedom the millions who -- submerged by the pressures of these times -- have abandoned individual values and drifted into the iron conformity of totalitarianism.