

CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
PUBLIC HEALTH SECTION

Report of the Committee on Applied Sociology

THE Committee in attempting to formulate its report on Applied Sociology recognizes the two standpoints from which the subject may be viewed, viz., that of society and that of the individual and especially of the individual physician. It observes further that as sociology refers to individuals in the mass, so the various matters dealt with in such a report must apply especially to the association of individuals as members of communities. Critical observers of the great world movements have everywhere been noting, especially with the twentieth century, the evolution of what is called a social consciousness in the western world, which for a century had been especially dominated by the theories most elaborately taught by John Stuart Mill in his political economy in which individualistic competition was set forth as the real basis upon which a progressive society could exist. Plainly, however, there is a higher ideal, and that is that the members of society should exist for the good of one another. In public health such a theory had its genesis largely in Edwin Chadwick, the slum worker, who was instrumental in getting the Registration Act for births, marriages, and deaths of England placed on the Statute Book in 1838 and later the first Public Health Act in 1849. With these two agencies it became possible, through the facts obtained, to apply remedies under Acts relating to nuisances, to housing, to pollution of streams, to contagious diseases and so on. But not until Pasteur and other workers established the germ theory of disease did it become possible to formulate methods for attacking disease systematically, whether in the individual or in the group. The first comprehensive means to this end is to be found in the Consolidated Public Health Act of England of 1875 which summarizes much found in previous isolated Acts. Nine years later this formed the basis of the Public Health Act of Ontario, which again was the model upon which all provincial legislation in Canada has been founded. Year by year thereafter amendments to the Act were added dealing with many problems, each coming closer in its bearing upon the daily life of the people. Speaking of anti-