

We must also ensure that economic reasons do not prevent any of our fellow-citizens from having reasonable access to the health care they require. This, let me suggest, is today's challenge for all who work in the health professions and who are dedicated to clearing ill-health and disease from the highroads of human progress.

There is, therefore, greatly intensified interest in equitably sharing the costs of illness. In Canada, for example, the principle of health insurance has been endorsed by all leading professional and health associations and by all major political parties. Public opinion polls in 1944 and again this summer show that eight out of every ten Canadians favour some form of Government health insurance.

Two Canadian provinces now have compulsory hospital insurance systems. There is also a hospital and medical care insurance scheme in effect in a small section of the Canadian west. Voluntary hospital and medical care insurance programmes are also very widely supported in Canada.

It is now four years since the Canadian Government made its extensive proposals to the provinces to aid them with their plans for distributing the cost of illness across the whole population. Our National Health Programme, about which I have had something to say tonight, provides the basic pre-requisites of a nation-wide system of health insurance. The new services being developed, and the hospitals being built, are hastening the moment when in every province it will be possible to take further action toward hospital and medical care insurance -- for which the Federal Government will provide assistance under satisfactory agreements for Federal-Provincial co-operation.

In Canada, the primary constitutional responsibility for health policy resides in the provinces. It was with this in mind that the Prime Minister of Canada said a short time ago that "it is up to the people and the Government in each province to take the initiative in working out health insurance plans in line with their local conditions and their traditions".

6. WORLD HEALTH HORIZONS

Opportunity for good health is a fundamental human right. Government has no higher responsibility than to guard it. Because of our understanding of the problem and because of the action that we are taking to solve it, we need have no fear for the future of public health on this continent. But, this right should be the heritage of all peoples. Let us lift up our eyes beyond our frontiers to the health horizons of the world.

In united world effort the strong nations should lend of their strength and the fortunate share their good fortune. Nations like ours that have built sound systems of public health and that enjoy high health levels should extend aid -- and ideas -- to countries less advanced in their health plans or less capable of carrying them out. Certainly, no part of the United Nations programme holds more hope for humanity than what is done by such agencies as the World Health Organization -- through which much of the important purpose of President Truman's Fourth Point can be translated into effective action.

For everyone who works in the field of public health the half-century ahead is a time for great advances. Special effort, special vision will be called for. Let us face up to the magnitude and the complexity of our task. Least of all mankind's problems, can health be narrowly defined; everything that affects human welfare affects health; disease respects no distinction of class or of country.

By strengthening our defences against disease, by encouraging dynamic programmes for positive good health, by bringing all our people within the reach of good health care, we can continue to play our significant part in shaping on this continent an incomparable way of life.