

HOW IS NATO DOING

An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L. B. Pearson, delivered at the Directors' Luncheon on International and Health Day, Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto, September 2, 1952.

... There is a very real connection between health — personal, national and international — and the relations between states. Was not the loss of one of Napoleon's most important battles due to the fact that the Emperor had eaten something at breakfast that disagreed with him, so that he was not at his physical best that fateful day? There are numberless other occasions where the bad health of an individual — from Caesar's fits to Pitt's gout — has played its part in the determination of the destiny of millions.

On the national sphere no people can progress politically, economically or in any other way, if, collectively, they are an unhealthy group. Every civilized government (and some whose claim to civilization we have the right to question) recognize this. The relation between health and poverty has been established beyond doubt as has the relation between poverty and social unrest, political disturbance and the acceptance of the sordid and debasing doctrines of Communism.

It has also been recognized that, in the field of health, as in so many other fields, national action is not enough. So we have increasing co-operation between states in this field — notably through the World Health Organization, where so much beneficial and humanitarian work is being done without benefit of headlines — without benefit also of the co-operation of single Cominform state.

All this health progress — on all levels — is fine and encouraging provided that we so order our international affairs that nations do not become vigorous and healthy merely to fight each other.

As the representative of Israel put it recently at the Fifth World Health Assembly:

Should we promote health only to provide more people for slaughter in battles and wars? Should we fight against infant mortality only to spare the children to be murdered later on by bombs and starvation? Medical men can only be promoters of peace. Our work would be quite meaningless if it were not based on the conviction that the destination of man is life and creation, not death and destruction.

It is not only medical men who must believe in and act on this philosophy. It is today burned into the souls of all of us. Our deepest hopes and our most terrible anxieties centre round the question of peace or war in the atomic age. There are other problems of course, of which may seem closer to home, like taxes and the cost of steaks or the stupidity of those who govern us. But that of peace between peoples transcends everything, now that "science has been harnessed to the chariot of destruction", and we realize that war might be the end of all.

A poll was taken in Canada the other day by the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion. I confess that my feeling about polls is that which I have about pills, they can be very useful if taken in moderation and with care. But I certainly agree with the result of this poll which showed that 22 per cent of those who were asked "What is the greatest single problem facing the government?" replied "War and defence", while the next group, only 8 per cent were worried more about the high cost of living.

How, then, are we doing in the effort to prevent war? Has there been any fundamental change in the nature and urgency of the menace that faces us?

The answer to the last question is "no". The danger to peace and the threat to freedom remain as immediate and as menacing as ever. There may be an easing of