

Good Health in a Healthy Society

These, then, are some of the highlights of Canada's National Health Programme. By any standard, public health achievements in this country merit respect. But the steady and responsible progress of our health plans takes on added significance when considered against the sombre background of a world in turmoil.

And that brings me back to what I said at the outset of these remarks about the relation between what we are doing for the health of our people and our efforts to build a healthier, more peaceful world. There can be no question that concern for the health of the individual is one of the surest marks of a humane and enlightened society. Just as surely, the subjugation of individual welfare is one of the first signs of tyranny. Perhaps I might be permitted to recall the words I used a year ago in speaking to the annual meeting of this Association in Winnipeg:

"In societies that themselves are sick, the health of the individual is of little account. In any conflict of interest that develops between the state and its members, the state comes always first. That is one reason why Communism can sometimes conquer but can never convince those nourished in the warm humanity of the civilization of the Western World."

Today, we stand impatient on the threshold of many promising opportunities to enlarge the enjoyment of life, to restrict disease and to reinforce health -- not only here in Canada but in less fortunate lands that, because of hunger, poverty and disease, lag generations and centuries behind the common forward march of humanity.

But all our progress is threatened by the ever present possibility of world conflict. We are forced to invest time, talent, and productive energy in building up our defences to safeguard national security. Through patient international negotiation at the United Nations, we are working in good faith to provide a better world in which men and nations can walk together in friendliness and self-respect. But I say to you today that nothing serves more to strengthen our way of life and to give heart to our own people and faith to those in other lands than humanitarian efforts to further the cause of human health and well-being, not for ourselves alone but for all mankind.

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Finally, there has been a very decided increase in preventive and diagnostic facilities and services. New clinics have been set up to fight cancer, arthritis and rheumatism, mental illness and crippling conditions in children, while free X-ray examinations and B.C.G. immunization are helping to bring tuberculosis under control.