

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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HEALTH'S NEW HORIZON

An address by Hon. Paul Martin,
Minister of National Health and
Welfare, to the Health League of
Canada, Toronto, February 7, 1947.

Subjects Covered:

World Health Organization - (Canadian
Participation) Civil Aviation -
Medicine in Canada - Health Services
for Indians and Eskimos - Infant and
Maternal Mortality Rates - Growth of
Hospital Services

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: The privilege you have given me of addressing this meeting is one which I greatly appreciate.

For some time past all those who have had even a casual interest in the problems of public health have been aware of the outstanding work being done by the Health League of Canada in promoting public interest in the value of health, of having it and how to keep it. A great deal has been accomplished; but each new season seems to bring something new to contend with.

For many years -- centuries would be a more exact word -- the trend in the organization of society has been toward larger and larger units of operation. After many bitter blunders, we are learning to think more intensely in terms of an international relation. The organization of the United Nations is an expression of that conception. Under the aegis of the United Nations several specialized agencies are in process of development. Destined to be one of the most significant among these is, I believe, the World Health Organization.

The original suggestion for such an arm of the United Nations was advanced by the Brazilian and Chinese representatives at the San Francisco conference in the early summer of 1945. The Canadian delegation supported the proposal, saying that Canada recognized the pressing need for a review of the existing institutions and for the establishment of effective and co-ordinated international machinery in the field of public health.

As a result of this recommendation the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations set up a technical preparatory committee of 15 persons to lay plans for an international health conference. Canada's deputy minister of national health was chosen by the Economic and Social Council as one of the members of this group. The committee met in Paris during March and April and subsequently reported its proposals to a meeting of the Economic and Social Council in New York City. The Council authorized the convocation of an international health conference which was held shortly after, in June and July. The torrid heat of New York City at that season of the year proved to be a gruelling test of the general stamina and physical fitness of the delegates!