

ADDRESS

BY

JAMES STEWART, M.D.,

Professor of Medicine and Clinical Medicine, McGill University ; Physician to the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal.

The first resolution on the paper before us deals essentially with the measures which should be adopted to lessen and prevent the spread of tuberculosis. Scientific medicine has shown clearly and indisputably the cause of this widespread disease, and has indicated how it is to be lessened and, possibly, entirely eradicated. To accomplish this end there must be a combined effort on the part, not only of general and local governing bodies, but also of individuals generally.

There can be no doubt that it is the duty of the government of all civilized communities to safeguard the lives of its citizens. This is stipulated in the fundamental laws of that great country to which we have the honour to belong. Tuberculosis in its manifold manifestations is the most potent cause of misery and death, and yet how little have been the efforts made by any government to stamp it out. What untold sums are spent and how many valuable lives are lost in defending and spreading the business interests of the nations, and in upholding national honour and national pride! There are signs, however, of an awakening in many places, and this meeting is an evidence of that, and will, we all hope, lead to some measures of practical reform of a public character.

Before much can be accomplished, people generally must be educated up to a clear knowledge of what tuberculosis is and how it is to be lessened. Government can very rarely legislate beyond the average of intelligence. The medical profession for many years now have been doing a great deal to inculcate into the minds of people what tuberculosis is, and the value of fresh air in its prevention and cure. Individual efforts of this kind would have to extend over a long period before there would be a general recognition of the facts. What is wanted is the powerful and widespread influence of the public press, the greatest lever for banishing ignorance, when used rightly. A combined effort of the public press for a short time, would do much more than the individual efforts of decades. We want, however, a pure press. We do not want, for instance, an article in one part of a public newspaper pointing out the true nature and treatment of tuberculosis, while another part of the same sheet is given over to some quack's advertisement, pretending to cure the disease. Are there any newspapers in Canada to-day that do not contain advertisements of alleged cures of tuberculosis?

The most important measure for the prevention of tuberculosis is the