

we hope to obtain that objective. As I said a moment ago, a great deal had been accomplished through the adoption of preventive measures by organized departments of health. These people, aided by physicians, nurses and dentists and the work of voluntary health agencies, have made many important contributions. For instance, we have a reduction in the death rate of tuberculosis in one province alone to one-fifth of what it was in 1900; a reduction in typhoid fever to one-fiftieth of the rate in 1900; a reduction in the diphtheria death rate to 1/85th of what it was in 1900. These are just a few illustrations of what has been accomplished.

There has been a marked reduction, too, in the number of infants who have died in the first year of life, so that the infant mortality rate for the whole of Canada has fallen from ninety-three per thousand living births in 1926, to sixty in 1940. These great reductions in the number of deaths of infants and young children have resulted in an increase in the life expectancy. In the United States the life expectancy in 1900 was 49.2 years. This was raised to 63.7 years in 1942, which represents an increase of approximately 13½ years. The position in Canada with reference to life expectancy is very similar. Primarily that increase in life expectancy is due to the great reductions in the death rate among infants and young children. Gratifying as are these results in sickness and deaths very much remains to be done. In 1942 there was something over 6,000 deaths from tuberculosis and something like 250 from diphtheria; far too many. I merely state these things, Mr. Speaker, to point out to hon. members that there is a great field for preventive medicine in Canada and that it can be carried out only if the federal government gives leadership, guidance and financial assistance to the provinces and health educational agencies.

I should now like to say a word or two with reference to the particular matter which was brought up this afternoon by the hon. member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Leader), who spoke of Doctor Davidson's supposed cure for cancer. I am not going to make any attempt to refute the arguments or the statistical data he presented to the house. However, lest the impression go abroad in this country that nothing is being done by the medical profession in regard to the study and treatment of cancer, I want to place on record the fact that we have in this country several agencies and men high in the medical profession making a continuous study of the cause and treatment of cancer. There is, for instance, the Rockefeller foundation of New York, which has been one of the greatest benefactors of mankind

[Mr. McCann.]

in reference to medical research. It has not placed any limit upon the amount of money it has made available to universities and research bodies on this continent in the attempt to find out the cause of cancer and what can be done for it. In addition, we have in this country what is called the Canadian cancer research foundation, which has been carrying on this work for several years. Every university in Canada, particularly the university of Toronto through the Connaught laboratories, carries on from day to day, every day, research in that particular line; and any worth-while suggestions are brought to the attention of one of these bodies and investigated. The British are doing the same thing; they have the British research society for cancer. In this country the medical societies, including the Manitoba medical association, the Canadian medical association, the public health association and many others, are carrying on this work.

The American medical association and the British medical association review each year what has been done and the advances that have been made, and state definitely the position of the medical fraternity and the medical schools in reference to cancer. They have come to this conclusion, that as yet they do not know what the causal factor of cancer is. They do know, however, as we put it in medical terms, that it is excessive proliferation of a type of cell, which means an excessive growth. Whether that is due to infection; whether it is due to some glandular disturbance; whether it is due to some nutritional disturbance, has not been determined. But just as a few swallows do not make a spring, neither do a few sporadic cases which have obtained benefit from a particular kind of treatment warrant the profession saying, "Here we have a cure for this particular disease."

It has been accepted by the medical profession that no case can be counted cured unless for a term of at least seven years after treatment there is no evidence of any recurrence. To put it briefly, I think I can say that the position of the medical profession to-day is that the cure for this particular disease is surgery and X-ray and radium treatments. I am sympathetic to the point of view which has been put forward by the hon. member for Portage la Prairie, but this form of treatment having been investigated by the medical society of the province of Manitoba—

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre):  
And by Sir Frederick Banting.

Mr. McCANN: —and by Sir Frederick Banting and other authorities. I do not believe this government, the department of