

water and pure milk. So, while each city and rural community will have as a definite objective the most vital need in that particular place, the various health agencies will have definite objectives according to the particular problem they set for themselves to solve.

The health program to be submitted to the conference has been in preparation for months, experts of the Public Health Service long having foreseen the need of such a nation-wide effort. A preliminary announcement of the plan was made at New Orleans at the recent meeting of the American Public Health Association which gave unanimous endorsement.

Few realize what has already been accomplished in the field of preventive medicine or what can be done by a carefully executed health program which is cumulative and continuous rather than spasmodic and desultory in character.

In 1900 the general death rate from all causes in the United States was 17.8;—in 1917, the latest figures available, it had been reduced to 14.2. Had the 1900 death rate prevailed in 1917 there would have been in the United States, with an estimated population of 110 million, 396,000 more deaths than actually occurred.

The record of other years leaves little room to doubt what may be done in saving life. In 1900 typhoid fever caused a death rate of 33.8 per 100,000 population. In 1917 the rate had been reduced to 13.4. Diphtheria was reduced from 35.4 to 16.5 in the same period. Tuberculosis declined from 190.5 deaths per 100,000 of population in 1900 to 146.4 in 1917. Had the 1900 rate prevailed in typhoid fever, diphtheria and tuberculosis, in 1917 these three diseases alone would have caused 91,740 more deaths than actually occurred.

The Public Health Service is led to believe that its health program is feasible owing to the fortunate co-operation and successful termination of the extra cantonment work which was carried on so efficiently by the American Red Cross, State and local health authorities and the U. S. Public Health Service. The lesson taught by this splendid demonstration of team work should not be lost to the country. For this reason, the American Red Cross, which has set aside millions of dollars for health work in the United States, has been asked to take an active part in translating the health program into action. Its thousands of local chapters are counted on to arouse and maintain interest in health work and actively co-operate with Federal, State and local health officers in accordance with the announced policy of the American Red Cross to co-operate with existing health agencies.

(What is true of the United States is very largely true for Canada. Prevention is always the most important thing to aim for.—Ed. *Lancet*).