



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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DISSOLVING IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES

Excerpts from an address by Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker, at the opening of the Ninth International Paediatrics Congress, Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Montreal, Quebec, July 20, 1959.

There can be no more noble or worthwhile a task than the prevention and cure of childhood diseases, which is the professional dedication of this international gathering of men and women whose purpose is the well-being of children for the betterment of mankind.

The time is past when we can hope for the solution of any of our major problems within the confines of any single nation. As science brings all lands closer together, the problems of one country become the problems of all, and, what is even more significant, the problems of all become the problems of each.

This Conference, comprising as it does medical scientists from so many countries, cultures, creeds and races of mankind, is an inspiring example of what single-minded dedication to a common problem mankind has achieved and will achieve in greater measure in the years ahead. Indeed, it is an example to those of us whose responsibilities lies in other fields which include the inter-relationship of men and women the world over.

This assembly brings together men and women of East and West--of 63 countries, including a number from Eastern Europe. I believe that international gatherings which provide opportunities for mutual co-operation and the exchange of opinions and views (aside from the personal benefits which accrue) have a major function to perform in the improvement of the international climate.

Medical science recognizes no limitations or boundaries in its mission for mankind, and has demonstrated that the gulf between two political ideologies can be bridged in a spirit of mutual help and co-operation.

This Conference shows that ideological differences can be dissolved where there is a will and a willingness to do so when the purpose is human suffering.

Sir William Osler, the great Canadian doctor and philosopher, fifty years ago summed up world problems in these words:

"Humanity has but three great enemies: fever, famine and war. Of these, by far the greatest, by far the most terrible, is fever."

These enemies have still to be mastered although much has been done in the prevention or alleviation of human ills. The medical profession, in a professional co-operation among all nations, has swept aside the barriers of geography or political philosophy.

In plans such as the Colombo Plan and the like, countries have joined to remove the threat of famine and to raise their economic standards everywhere in the world.

However, in the field of International relations many nations of the world have not yet learned the need of world co-operation to the end that war will be prevented and peace assured.

The attainment of peace rests not on statesmen and politicians, but on all of the people of every country, and in gatherings such as this a worthwhile contribution is made to the establishment of a climate of peace through understanding, co-operation and tolerance.

The almost limitless march of science in the last few decades, fostered in a consciousness of human brotherhood which transcends national boundaries, has achieved miracles for mankind in this century.

The great paradox of this age is that the developing social consciousness at work in medical science and in such institutions as the World Health Organization, and in the international schemes to assist the economic development of under-developed nations, has not been matched in the realm of political relations.

No Alternative

Furthermore, the march of science while dethroning disease and famine as the most terrible scourges of man has raised war to the first of the evils confronting mankind. It has been truly said that there is now no alternative to negotiation and no alternative to peace. War is no longer a scourge but the instrument of annihilation.

This Convention, with such wide participation, is a demonstration that there has been some reduction in international tension in the past few years, for it is improbable that the countries of Eastern Europe would have been so widely represented at any similar congress held as recently as six years ago.

Does not this raise the hope that, although there are no spectacular or magic solutions of world problems, a gradual improvement in the international climate may be attained if there is a continuing exchange of views and visits between the leaders and people of East and West.

I believe that it has been demonstrated that the gulf between the two ideologies can be bridged, for in meeting the problems of health and science there is hope that the gap can be narrowed in the solution of larger and more far-reaching world issues, provided the free world does not weary in negotiation.

I believe that the gap must be narrowed, and that consultation and discussion must take place in order to achieve settlement of international issues which, in creating tension, could spark a conflict that would be disastrous for all mankind.

It is in this spirit that Canadians have agreed to certain reciprocal exchanges of visitors between this country and countries of Eastern Europe.

I believe that a more stable foundation for peace will be laid when there will be lesser barriers to the movement of people across national boundaries, and fewer unjustifiable hindrances to the free flow of ideas and information to all parts of the world.

I have spoken of the importance of negotiation, and I am encouraged by the signs of progress at Geneva, where the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom, the United States, France and the U.S.S.R. have resumed their discussions.

Continuing Effort

The Canadian Government has repeatedly emphasized the importance of continuing negotiations between East and West, and of the value of the most searching joint examination by East and West of major issues which separate them, provided that no solution will be acceptable which jeopardizes the freedom of the people of West Berlin, or forecloses ultimate German reunification.

It is probable that the Geneva discussions will lead the way to a desirable meeting at the level of heads of government, although there should be no misapprehension that a summit meeting would be a speedy process leading to immediate and far-reaching settlements of differences which encompass the fabric of our political and economic life.

In the British House of Commons recently Prime Minister Macmillan, in speaking of a summit meeting, expressed a few words of caution which I wish firmly to endorse. He said:

"The journey which we have to undertake in this pilgrimage is likely to be a long one and it will require patience as well as faith."

Canada has every reason to be particularly interested in the work of paediatrics. Canada is a young country in years and in population being a Confederation for less than 100 years. With one-third of its population (or 5,661,800 persons) under 15 years of age Canada's birthrate is foremost among those of the major industrial nations of the world, and the care of children is the most vital of its national tasks.

In Canada direct responsibility for health services rests with provincial and local governments, assisted by national and local voluntary agencies. The Federal Government's activities are constitutionally confined to special programmes of a nation-wide nature and to the provision of assistance to the provinces. These programmes take many forms, the most important of which is a programme of national hospital insurance finally inaugurated in the last two years and in which eight of the ten provinces are now co-operating with the National Government.

That Canada has shared with other countries of the world in the conquest of many of the ancient scourges of mankind is well known. Sir Frederick Banting and Dr. Charles Best made the epochal discovery of insulin, the treatment of diabetes and Canada made a significant contribution to the development of the vaccine for poliomyelitis.

Much more remains to be done. The need for further research in the field of diseases of children was given recognition in the establishment by the Parliament of Canada during the last month of the Queen Elizabeth II Canadian Research Fund to Aid in Research on the Diseases of Children in commemoration of the visit of Her Majesty, The Queen of Canada. This fund will provide an additional assistance to a half million dollars provided by Parliament during the present fiscal year under the National Health Grants programme for research related to diseases of children.

The purpose of the Queen's Fund will be to provide financial aid to institutions and individuals in Canada engaged in research in children's diseases. I need only mention the problems of leukemia and mental retardation in children, and neo-natal deaths, to indicate something of the magnitude of the problem.

The Fund is primarily a Canadian enterprise, but I need hardly add that whatever benefits or discoveries are attained in the furtherance of its purposes will be available for the benefit of mankind.

May I, in performing my official responsibilities in declaring this Congress open, express the hope that out of the deliberations which take place will come not only benefit to mankind in the field of medicine, but as well to contribute to other fields of human activity and international relations, or, described by Sir William Osler as his personal chart of life.

"I have three personal ideals. One, to do the day's work well and not to bother about tomorrow The second ideal has been to act the Golden Rule, as far as in me lay, toward my professional brethren and toward the patients committed to my care. And the third has been to cultivate such a measure of equanimity as would enable me to bear success with humility, the affection of my friends without pride, and to be ready when the day of sorrow and grief came to meet it with the courage befitting a man."

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