

SUMMING UP

Chairman

Dr Pinsent may have given us a clue that we might eventually adopt to the taking of tranquillisers.

We have all been amazed by those beautiful photographs of the earth's cloud cover taken from the Apollo spacecraft. Some authorities have pointed out that this cloud cover is unique, certainly in our solar system and possibly in the universe, and that man is living on a very remarkable planet. Today we have been discussing what happens under that cloud cover and the problems that beset us. In the evolutionary process, Darwin linked the survival of the fittest with the destruction of the unfit. We do not want man to be included amongst the unfit, leaving the world populated by a few universal species like *Musca domestica* or the measles virus.

Man is not born equal, and inequality is likely to remain in various parts of the world. It is all the more remarkable that during the process of adaptation we have devised an internal hormone system as well as special systems for dealing with all the known elements. The obvious elements such as sodium, potassium, chlorine, iodine, calcium, phosphorus, iron and the sugars have specific areas which are responsible for the biochemical balance.

When a patient asks for a tonic, the reply should be that you cannot be fitter than the food you eat. A diet of wholemeal bread, the correct quantity of fat, and cigarette smoking are all to be considered as factors. One of the most pathetic cases of muddled thinking was that of a young man who asked for a certificate so that he could go on a mountain climbing exercise in North Wales. I looked at the brown stain on his fingers and asked why he wanted to go to North Wales to become healthy—could he not become healthy just by ceasing to smoke?

This is the illogicality of the public, and we must educate them so that they do not expect every consultation to finish with a prescription. I am reminded of McCarrison's mice which were bred in India during the early part of this century. They were fed on each of the classical Indian diets and at the finish the Bengali-fed mice developed Bengali diseases whilst the Madras-fed mice developed the common Madras diseases. Dr Crawford has been telling us a very similar story, that we cannot be fitter than the food we eat and that it is essential that we keep our food healthy.

We have considered atmospheric pollution from various points of view, but one that I am surprised that no one has discussed is the microhumidity of our rooms. We have seen the increase in certain types of respiratory infections due to the increasing spread of central heating and the dropping of the relative humidity with the consequent drying out of the nasal secretions. It is an interesting fact that two of the three great body surfaces, the respiratory tract and the gut, are still under water. The skin has dried out, but the internal body surfaces still require high humidity. Granny knew this when she used the steam kettle on the child who was desperately ill with croup. If we are to reduce the incidence of winter colds we should insist that every radiator be fitted with a humidifier and that the hot air blowers should be abolished because the creation of a dry atmosphere is almost certainly followed by an increase in respiratory infection.

Dr Hodgkin made a very thoughtful remark when he said that our freedom from fear and want is allowing us a greater range of individuality, including the freedom to make the wrong decision. This is exemplified by the fact that everyone knows of the dangers of smoking but not everyone wants to stop.

This brings me on to the moral issues which surround us. It is about 2,000 years since someone said that 'unless a man be born again in the spirit he will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.' If this remark is followed to its logical conclusion, it assumes that we also have a right not to be born again. If this is the case then this world and this life may be the only one for these people and will certainly affect their moral values. Thus we not only have a polluting atmosphere surrounding us but we also have an internal pollution of ideas. One of the factors which allowed us to win the First World War was the blockade of Germany, and when I visited Germany between the wars I was told of the considerable deprivation suffered through the blockade. People like Hitler were growing up during that period, and I ask myself whether the Nazi development in Germany was contributed to in any way by the lowering of their health standards at that time.

I would like to thank all of our speakers for their contributions and my particular thanks to the Yorkshire Faculty for entertaining us to such a lively symposium. I would like to single out Dr Colin Watson for the hard work that he has put into organising this symposium, and return thanks to the University of Leeds for allowing us the use of this excellent theatre.