

ages, the more significant reduction in mortality rates has been among women, there have been decreases in death rates for specific diseases among both sexes. A record of 469,093 births in 1957 maintained the postwar high fertility rates but the infant mortality rate of 31 still stands far above the lowest current records of countries like Sweden and the Netherlands (both 17). Nearly two-thirds of the deaths among children occur in the first month of life, a reflection of the high death rate from immaturity, birth injury and congenital malformations. Satisfactory trends in maternal death rates continued in 1957, the maternal mortality rate of 0.5 per 1,000 live births being at a level comparable with other leading countries.

Environmental health services have greatly reduced the incidence of such water- and food-borne infections as typhoid fever. Vaccination has eliminated smallpox of which there were over 3,000 cases as recently as 1928. The extensive development of antibiotics and other prophylactic agents such as poliomyelitis vaccine has reduced the severity of or the degree of disability caused by many primary infections and has provided protection against secondary infection. In 1956 only 1.8 p.c. of all deaths were due to infectious diseases, including tuberculosis; thirty years ago infectious diseases accounted for 12.6 p.c. of deaths. A similar decrease has occurred in other diseases such as rheumatic fever and pneumonia where infection plays a part in the disease processes. The introduction of ataractic drugs in treatment of mental illness has assisted in expediting the clinical control and rehabilitation of mental patients.

But, while many of man's oldest diseases are being controlled, the nature and cure of chronic and degenerative illness remain too largely unknown, and new sources of ill health are emerging from the complex development of industrial civilization. Occupational hazards from toxic substances and accidents have become a matter of increasing concern. The contamination of air and water from industrial wastes becomes a progressively more severe problem. Accidents are assuming an alarming position among the leading causes of death; vehicular and other traffic accidents result in a tragic mounting loss of life. The rapid development of urban living has also created many other problems related to health. Inadequate housing and recreation facilities, excessive use of alcohol and drug addiction are predominantly special urban problems. Increasing use of radioactive agents in many different fields of endeavour requires special health precautions and the general problem of the effects of radiation on life is one of the most important and pressing of today.

Health of Young People.—Following the first year of life, survival rates are high throughout childhood. Although more than one-third of the population are between one and 20 years of age, they account for only one of every 25 deaths. Accidents account for the largest number of deaths in childhood, principally traffic casualties and drownings. Respiratory and digestive disorders are also leading causes of death.

Despite the relatively low death rate, sickness rates in childhood remain high. The Canadian Sickness Survey of 1951 showed that 87 p.c. of the children under 15 years of age reported sickness and 57 p.c. reported some time spent sick in bed. Each child suffered an average of three sicknesses a year. Sicknesses lasted 12 days on the average. Colds and influenza, which are rife at all ages, were leading causes of sickness among children. The communicable diseases of childhood (measles, mumps, chickenpox, whooping cough and scarlet fever) also accounted for much sickness; well over 1,000,000 cases of these diseases were reported during the survey year. In March 1957 there were nearly 5,000 persons suffering from long-term conditions, generally congenital or arising in early childhood, such as epilepsy, cerebral spastic infantile paralysis or the late effects of infantile paralysis. Over 10,000 mentally defective persons received allowances for total and permanent disabilities, in addition to those being cared for in institutions.

Health of Adults.—The health of the adult population has also been affected by modern preventive and treatment services, and control of many infectious respiratory and digestive diseases has markedly reduced death rates from these causes. Degenerative diseases, however, continue to take an increasing toll of life and health through the working years.