

WORKING PEOPLE OF THE WHOLE WORLD, UNITE!

KIM IL SUNG

**LET US IMPLEMENT
THE PUBLIC HEALTH LAW
TO THE LETTER**

Speech Delivered at the Fourth Session
of the Sixth Supreme People's Assembly
of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
April 4, 1980

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Comrades,

We have adopted the Public Health Law at this session of the Supreme People's Assembly.

This is the first time such a law has been adopted in our country, which despite having a history of 5 000 years has never before had a public health law.

The adoption of this law is also something rare in the world.

Its adoption is another historic event that adds lustre to the era of our Workers' Party; it is a very happy and glorious thing and is something of which we can be proud before the world. It is a source of great national pride and confidence for our people that they have a Public Health Law for the first time in their history, a law which is rarely to be found in the world.

It is thanks to the infinite love of our Party for the people that we have come to acquire this law. Our Party has always shown the greatest affection and concern for the people to ensure that they live longer in happiness and work for more years in good health. The passing of the Public Health Law can also be attributed to the fact that all the people have made strenuous efforts to implement the Party's lines and policies in

active support of our Party and the Government of our Republic. In other words, the legislation was possible as a result of the fusion of two sorts of love—love of the Party and the Government for the people and love of the people for the Party and Government.

We have adopted the Public Health Law neither because we are rich nor because our medical skills are developed. Its sole aim is to provide the people with an even happier life.

The passing of a people-oriented health law is not possible in a country simply because it is rich, nor is it possible merely because its medical skills are advanced. A country which shows no affection for the people cannot adopt such a law however wealthy it may be. The same holds true for a state which sets a high value only on money and does not hold its people dear, although its medical skills are developed.

A people-oriented health law can be adopted only in a country where the people hold state power and where the party and the government devote everything for the good of the people.

The system of free medical care now in force in our country has a long history.

As early as in the days of the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle we took the people-oriented

health measure of offering free medical treatment to the people in the guerrilla zones. Of course, this system could not cover a large area nor was it very satisfactory.

After liberation we introduced the system of universal free medical care during the Fatherland Liberation War.

During the war the US imperialists bombed our towns and villages indiscriminately. As a result of their bestial bombing, both rich farmers in the rural communities and the petite bourgeoisie in the towns were bankrupted. During the war all our people were in a difficult situation with no shelter or household articles. Empty-handed, they could not afford to pay for medicine.

During the hard period of the war the people put their trust in the Party, and the Party in the people, and they united as one to overcome all the difficulties. In those days the situation was so difficult that the people were unable even to pay for medicine, so our Party and the Government of our Republic adopted measures to provide free medical treatment for them. As a result, the system of universal free medical care, the most popular of health care systems, under which all the people, whenever necessary, are provided with medical treatment free of charge, was enforced in the arduous

days of the war. The introduction of this system was another great benefit provided by our Party and the Government of the Republic for the people.

When the country's economy had been restored and the people's standard of living improved to a considerable extent after the armistice, some officials suggested that a nominal fee should be paid by the patients for treatment so that the economy of the country could be managed better. But the Party Central Committee decided to continue with the system of universal free medical care, determined that we should overcome our difficulties with our belts tightened still more. In this way the most popular and progressive system of universal free medical care has been in force here for nearly 30 years, since the war.

As was pointed out in the report, the average life span of our people has reached the high level of 73 years. This increase in the life span has been possible not because our people are better fed than those in other countries nor because they take a lot of tonics and elixirs of life which are unavailable to foreigners. It is entirely due to the fact that our socialist system is superior and all the people enjoy a happy life under this system free from any worries. The faithful treatment given by health workers to patients through the

sincerity movement has played a role in this respect, but it is not the main factor. The basic factor that lies behind the increase in the average life span of our people is the superiority of our socialist system.

Our people are now enjoying a happy life to the full, free from any cares or worries. No one knows any worries about food, clothing or housing, nor does anyone trouble himself in the slightest about the education of his children, medical treatment and taxes. There is no one in our country who oppresses or exploits people, nor is there anyone who beats or detains others. Instead of being hampered by debts, our people have large sums of money in banks. This being the case, what sort of worries can there be for them? Their life is filled only with pleasure.

Our younger generation has no idea of what a straw sandal is like and what exploitation or tenant rent means. Our children are unaware of even the word *gruel* and young women do not know how to cook it.

In our country there is an old saying that one eats boiled rice for breakfast and gruel for supper. This is a comment on the poor living conditions of our people. Our people's general standard of living was such in the past. Therefore, the expression is often found in novels about times gone by. But this is not the case

with our people today; they eat boiled rice for all three meals every day. The word *gruel* has disappeared for good from the spoken language of our people.

The superiority of our socialist system and the well-being of the people enable them to lead a long life. The promotion of the people's health that has extended their average life span to 73 is a brilliant success of the public health service.

With a view to ratifying legally the achievements already made and developing health care still further, we have adopted the Public Health Law at this session of the Supreme People's Assembly. With the adoption of this law, our superior health care system and the successes achieved in this work have been provided with a sound legal guarantee, and we have obtained a powerful weapon for developing the public health service in the future.

Every condition and potential now exists in our country for furthering public health work. Our socialist system has been consolidated, its superiority is being displayed to a greater extent with each passing day and the might of our independent socialist national economy is greater than ever before.

If we work harder in the future to improve the standard of living of the people and ensure that they

live more happily, they will live even longer. We must bring about a new advance in public health care by implementing the Public Health Law to the letter and so ensure that the health of the working people is promoted and the life span of the whole population increased.

I would like to refer to some problems in putting the Public Health Law into effect.

First of all, we must thoroughly implement our Party's policy on preventive medicine.

Prophylaxis is the basis of socialist medicine. The main aspect of it is to adopt measures to stop people falling ill, instead of treating them after they contract a disease.

In a capitalist society, large quantities of medicine can be sold to people when they are taken ill, so preventive medical care is neglected. Socialist medicine is fundamentally different from capitalist medicine in that it is prophylactic.

We must implement the policy on preventive medicine to the full so that no working man or woman ever falls ill.

One important aspect of this is to prevent pollution completely.

Our country is free from pollution. This is the

major reason why the people of the world are envious of Pyongyang, saying that it is a fine city in which to live. The absence of pollution is conducive not only to the well-being of the people but also to the multiplication of wild animals. Since Pyongyang knows no pollution, mountain birds flock there. A foreign journalist who visited our country saw pheasants strutting about in the yard of a hotel in east Pyongyang and described it as a truly wonderful sight.

We must never neglect our efforts to prevent pollution simply because our country is free from pollution at the moment. Our country may also be contaminated by pollution when industry is further developed. Therefore, the more industry progresses, the more attention the state should pay to the prevention of pollution.

Some officials are not paying due attention to this matter. Because of the failure to eliminate the outdated practices left over by the Japanese imperialists, some mines still allow untreated ore residues to flow into rivers and some factories do not provide their workers with satisfactory hygienic and comfortable working conditions.

All factories and enterprises, people's government organs and Party organizations must make rigorous

efforts to prevent pollution and thus ensure the complete absence of it.

Another important matter in implementing the policy of preventive medicine is to acquaint the working people with more information concerning hygiene and develop their physical strength at the same time as providing them with satisfactory conditions for recreation.

It is important to allow the working people to take enough rest, as is set out in the Socialist Labour Law. Some officials assume that lengthening the working day by an hour or two does not matter. They are mistaken. Ensuring that workers take plenty of rest before their hard 8-hour working day is more beneficial than extending the working hours from the point of view of both an increase in labour productivity and the protection of the workers' health. Extending the working hours may lead to a fall in productivity and the production of reject goods, to say nothing of the harmful effect it may have upon the health of the workers. That is why officials should arrange the working day in accordance with the strict principle of 8 hours work, 8 hours rest and 8 hours study, as stipulated in the Socialist Labour Law. In this way they will not only increase labour efficiency but also protect

the health of the working people.

The living standards of our people will be improved in the future. If we prevent pollution effectively and develop the physical strength of the working people through popularizing physical education, at the same time as allowing them to take enough rest, we will be able to meet their desire to enjoy a longer life in good health.

All Party committees, as well as people's government and economic organs, must exert effective control over the work of implementing our Party's policy of preventive medicine and press ahead with it.

Next, we must further develop traditional Korean medicine.

This medicine is not viewed seriously by some health workers. The attitude of not believing in and looking down on traditional Korean medicine is prevalent particularly among those people who have a poor knowledge of this medicine because they have studied abroad. It is wrong to neglect Korean medicine.

Traditional Korean remedies are highly effective. Their efficacy is praised not only by our own people but also by foreigners. I met some famous foreign doctors who expressed their admiration for the excellence of Oriental folk remedies, traditional

Korean methods of treatment.

In modern medicine diseases are cured mainly by performing operations or killing germs, whereas traditional Korean medicine prevents people from falling ill by protecting their health, and as for medical treatment, the method of invigorating patients to overcome their ailments is applied.

Traditional Korean medicines include many tonics which protect the health of people. Among modern medicines a vitamin compound is the main remedy for protecting people's health, but among traditional Korean medicines there are lots of medicines made up of various elements that are beneficial to the health, such as essential amino acids, to say nothing of vitamins. Therefore, if this medicine is developed, we will be able to prevent diseases and protect the people's health better.

The development of this medicine makes it possible to cure diseases that cannot be cured by modern medicine. There have been many instances of this. A botanist who was afflicted by a cerebral haemorrhage recovered by using traditional medicines, not modern medicines. One woman official also had her eyes healed completely by using traditional medicines, even though the disease was one which had been regarded

as being difficult to cure by modern medicines. As a doctor of medical science from the hospital attached to Hamhung Medical College mentioned yesterday, the hospital cured a patient suffering from serious burns by means of traditional Korean remedies.

In future we must further develop traditional medicine and make every effort to encourage the people to rely on Korean remedies.

For the development of this medicine it is essential to combine traditional medicine well with modern medicine.

This will be a great help both in the effective treatment of patients and in the prevention of diseases.

Traditional Korean medicine is too simple in respect of diagnosis. This is its weak point. Diagnosis in traditional medicine relies only on examining the patient's pulse; this cannot be regarded as satisfactory.

As far as diagnosis is concerned, modern medicine is far more scientific than traditional medicine. The former uses up-to-date medical instruments for examining the blood, urine, heart and the like of the patient. Hence, a scientific diagnosis is possible. Such being the case, if you combine modern medicine's methods of diagnosis with traditional remedies, you can improve medical treatment.

Party committees and people's government organs of all levels should build up the Korean medicine department at every county hospital, put the medicine on a scientific basis and give great encouragement to the use of folk remedies.

In order to develop traditional Korean remedies, it is necessary to plant wide areas of medicinal herbs. We must preserve and increase the nation's medicinal herb resources and gather them in a planned way to make large quantities of traditional medicines for the protection of the people's health.

We must not neglect modern medicine on the pretext of developing traditional Korean medicine. The study of modern medicine should be stepped up continuously and modern medical science and technology put on a higher level.

To proceed, we must improve the training of health workers.

This is essential if the Public Health Law is to be fully implemented.

Our country has good centres for training health workers, and the training is now proceeding well.

A long time ago we set the policy of creating comprehensive cadre-training centres in the provinces and ensured that each province established universities

for training its own cadres. As a result each province has a medical university which trains as many health workers as it needs.

It is excellent that each province has its own specialized universities, such as those of medicine and agriculture, and trains its own officials. If a person in Pyongyang who has studied at Pyongyang University of Medical Sciences is appointed to work in Ryanggang Province, he may not be happy about it. But a person from Ryanggang Province who is educated at Hyesan Medical College and asked to return home to work is unlikely to be displeased. Our Party's policy of establishing comprehensive cadre-training centres in each province so that it can train its own officials to meet its own requirement is absolutely correct.

Thanks to the establishment of the provincial universities of medicine and to the education of health workers in the past, the number of health workers has increased considerably. Today our country has reached the level of the advanced nations in terms of the number of doctors for every 10 000 people.

An important task in training health workers is to improve the quality of medical education to produce able health workers.

In order to make this education more effective, it is

necessary to provide the medical universities with facilities and equipment for practical training. We must help to provide these universities with hospitals for practice, as well as furnishing them with modern medical equipment and appliances. The sectors concerned should, instead of confining their efforts to Pyongyang University of Medical Sciences, strive to provide the provincial universities of medicine with good equipment so that their students can conduct effective practical work.

For an improvement in the quality of medical education, a slightly longer period of study is required at these universities than at others. I know that the present course lasts six years. This is a reasonable length. This would seem long enough to train well-qualified students.

The sector responsible for training health workers should pay particular attention to the training of women health workers, at the same time as working hard to improve the quality of the education, so that we have a large number of women doctors.

I hope that all Party organizations, people's government organs and the people will pool their efforts to implement the Public Health Law to the letter through an all-people movement and thus make a great

contribution to ensuring that our people enjoy a longer, happier life in good health.

In conclusion, I would like to speak briefly about the task of executing this year's state budget properly.

At this session of the Supreme People's Assembly we have reviewed the implementation of the state budget for 1979 and discussed the one for 1980.

Our state budget is very sound. We have attained a surplus year after year in enforcing it and obtained vast financial reserves. This is excellent; it implies that our economy is developing at a high tempo every year.

Other countries, due to the worldwide fuel crisis, are now suffering serious problems in production, with a resultant steady rise in the prices of goods. But since we have created Juche-oriented industries which depend on our own resources, we are increasing production steadily even under the present situation in which the whole world is affected by a fuel crisis; so we are obtaining revenue from the state budget without having to raise the prices of commodities.

In our country, too, some scientists suggested at one time building oil-fired power stations which they said would take less time to construct. It is true that the construction of this type of power station takes a few

years less than that of a hydroelectric or coal-fed thermal power station. But crude oil is not yet being produced in our country. So, should the import of the required amount of crude oil be suspended after constructing oil-fired power stations, operations will come to a halt. This is why we refused to accept their suggestion.

At the time of building a chemical fibre mill, too, some people suggested constructing a petrochemical factory instead, saying that it was difficult to spin vinalon into fine yarn. However, this was also unacceptable to us, for a similar problem would arise in the operation of such a factory. Instead of building a petrochemical factory, we increased the capacity of the vinalon factory from 20 000 to 50 000 tons, a factory which would depend, for raw materials, on the anthracite and limestone that are abundant in our country. In this way we have succeeded in finding a solution to the problem of clothing for the people by relying on our own raw materials.

The present situation bears witness to the fact that our Party's policy of creating Juche-based industries which depend on our own resources is absolutely correct. Even those who proposed establishing industries that were fed on foreign materials admit that

they were wrong. If we had accepted their suggestions to create such industries, it would have been impossible for us to avoid a rise in the prices of goods and we would have failed to ensure the rapid development of production and the soundness of the state budget, since the whole world is suffering from a fuel crisis and the price of crude oil is rising continuously. In the future we must continue to develop Juche-based industries which rely on domestic resources, just as we have been doing up until now.

The light industry sector must work hard to produce varieties of durable and attractive daily necessities for the people by using those raw materials which are abundant in our country.

I have been told that the Wonsan Knitwear Factory uses vinalon to produce large quantities of durable and smart knitwear. This is very good. Vinalon is a good fibre; it is durable, easy to dye and can be made easily into a fine yarn. If vinalon is spun and cut into yarn it will become stronger, and then it can be used as cord in tyres or the inner thread of machine belts. Nowadays we are using vinalon yarn instead of nylon thread for tyres and belts, and these are durable and good.

If the officials in the light industry sector make strenuous efforts, they will be able to produce varieties

of all the daily necessities of high quality for the people by using only our own raw materials. They should all work hard to use domestic raw materials to produce these daily necessities for the people, displaying a high degree of Party loyalty, working-class loyalty and loyalty to the people. In addition, all the people should be more attached to the goods made from domestic materials and make extensive use of them.

Today the light industry sector is faced with the important task of improving the quality of daily necessities.

The clothes our people wear, for example, lack a variety of colour and are not tailored well. You should not make only black clothes or allow clothes to be made badly with high-quality cloth simply for the sake of a frugal life. It is not excessive luxury to wear a variety of smart, coloured clothes. Light industry should not only produce good-quality clothes that are varied in colour but also make attractive clothes. In this way all the people will wear high-quality, smart clothes which are varied in colour.

Good shoes should also be produced; they should be smart and varied. If they are high in quality, they can be worn for a long time and this means being economical.

The light industry sector must ensure quality and

variety in producing clothes, shoes and all other goods for daily use.

A strong campaign for economization should be launched in every sphere of the national economy.

We can prosper only when we manage the economic life of the country scrupulously and make economies to the utmost. However large the quantities we produce may be, we will not be able to lead an affluent life if we waste things. Officials must not be wasteful just because we have no worries about food, clothing and our daily needs. The more we prosper, the more we must economize in the use of every single gramme of iron, every string of thread and every drop of oil.

Above all else we must make great economies in our use of electricity and coal.

The waste of electricity is now widespread. Since electricity is produced at thermal power stations with coal, wasting it means wasting coal. Every sector and every unit must launch an energetic campaign to use electricity and coal economically.

Water should also be saved.

The water situation is now quite serious because we have had no rain since last autumn and no snow fell in winter. Some parts of the country are already experiencing a water shortage and the level of the rivers

is falling. Such being the case, we must use even a drop of water carefully and take steps to save water that has been used once and purify it so that it can be used again. The campaign for the economical use of water should be conducted not only in the rural areas but also in the towns and in the industrial sectors.

We must use cloth economically, too.

A great deal of cloth is now being wasted. If chairs, for instance, are made well out of wood, they will not need any cloth covering; nevertheless, they are covered with cloth even though there is no need for it, and so cloth is wasted. State and economic institutions should be the first to avoid such a practice and should strive to use cloth economically.

All the sectors of the national economy must place strong emphasis on the matter of the economical use of electricity, coal, water, steel and cloth and work hard to this end. Every field and every unit should execute the state budget for this year properly by producing more and better and by being economical.

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