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DRAFT -- 1/12/56  
Mr. Fogarty  
United Cerebral Palsy  
Regional Conference

I am very glad to be here with you tonight. Each year marks another step in the growth of your organized effort to bring cerebral palsy under control. I am sure this must be a source of pride to you, as it is a source of comfort to the many thousands of children and adults who benefit from what you do. I would like to pay tribute here to your dedicated spirit and to your effective services.

I will focus my remarks tonight on the Government's efforts on behalf of the cerebral palsied.

Most of you here have some kind of direct, personal commitment to the victims of cerebral palsy. By contrast, the Government's role may seem somewhat remote and impersonal. This impression may be heightened by the fact that the Government is often thought of as being so large and so far away that it would be most improbable that your sense of urgency concerning the problems of cerebral palsy could leap the distance between your community and Washington.

I can assure you that the Government has learned to understand the needs and interests and special problems which relate to cerebral palsy. And this understanding has been reflected in action.

As recently as five years ago, I recall that I commented in some despair that the victims of the various neurological disorders might accurately be called the "forgotten men." Today, this is no longer true. Tremendous advances have been made. New programs have been established and expanded. I am glad that the Government has been a partner in this progress. It is one more demonstration that the Government is not so remote from the people it serves.

The Government's commitment to the support of medical research and research training is a case in point. For the past fifteen years I have been privileged to be a member, and more recently chairman, of the Congressional Committee which has had the responsibility of providing appropriations to the Federal programs most directly concerned with the nation's health and welfare. Year after year, the public has seen the Government's contributions grow, until it now supports about

forty percent of all medical research in this country. And Government action is of course more than money; the programs it supports serve in a sense as catalytic agents, providing a meeting ground and a forum for both professional and public interests in the fight against disease.

During this same period of time, there has also been a sharp increase in private support for research, training, education, and community services in the health field. The parallel growth of public and private programs is a clear manifestation of the validity of the cause and of the processes by which the cause is advanced.

The American people may well be proud of the dramatic record of medical and public health progress which is being built during this concerted, nationwide effort.

I have said that one of my functions in Washington has to do with health appropriations. The responsibilities of the Congress for the Government's programs of health and welfare do not begin, however, with the allocation of dollars and cents. Rather this is the end product of

careful consideration, frequently marked -- as indeed it should be -- by productive discussion both in committee and before the houses of Congress.

The members of Congress cannot become expert in problems of disease. But there are ways to learn the essential facts that are relevant to legislative decisions. In attempting to determine the degree of support which should obtain for any given research area, for example, professional authorities are generous with their time. Reports are available. Government research installations and some of the institutions where research is being conducted under government support can be visited. Key facts can be gathered together with a little work. The incidence of the major diseases; death and disability rates; the degree to which the diseases cause social and economic deprivation; the status of prevention and treatment; the facilities for treatment, care, or training; the status of research and especially the potentialities for greater research exploitation -- all of these are on the record.

It is the awareness of interested Congressmen of facts such as these that has helped shape the Government's participation in the national attack on disease.

As some of you certainly know as a result of your own efforts on behalf of the cerebral palsied, the Government has no means for directly assisting the victims of any disease. Such assistance has always come from the State or the community, a tradition which relates to State rights but more basically stems from fundamental American principles of independence and self-reliance. The Federal Government, therefore, in order to assist the individual, makes funds available directly to the various State programs, with the administration of each program being the direct responsibility of each State.