

REMARKS OF HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, M.C. 2ND DISTRICT RHODE ISLAND
AT THE LUNCHEON FOR LEADERS OF THE RHODE ISLAND FEDERAL SERVICE
CAMPAIGN FOR NATIONAL HEALTH AGENCIES AT JOHNSONS-HUMMOCKS, THURSDAY
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This is an occasion that I approach with the utmost of pleasure. For, to me, there is something fine and typically American in both the concept and the practice of voluntary health and welfare agencies. Groups such as those represented here today epitomize the free association of individuals in common purpose--an essential ingredient of a healthy democracy.

It is a source of pride to me that voluntary movements of this kind flourish here in Rhode Island, for these are times when the basic mechanisms of our society are sorely tested. I would like to address my brief remarks today to the identification of certain of these challenges.

First, voluntary health and welfare agencies face greater competition for the interest and participation of our citizens. This arises from the fact that the number of voluntary groups has so proliferated and the character of their activities has become so diversified that the agencies find themselves in competition with each other. Such competition is at the heart of our social and economic and political system. But in the competitive processes, there is an inherent challenge to each member to rise above mediocrity by continuously improving the services it renders to society.

Another challenge which I perceive for you, as indeed for all of us, lies in the preoccupation of people everywhere with the sensational developments in atomic energy, guided missiles, and space travel. The challenge does not lie in the developments themselves (although Heaven knows they pose enough); rather, the challenge lies in the competition such developments represent for the mind of man. We must not permit them

to obscure any part of the pressing needs which the voluntary health and welfare agencies are dedicated to meet.

Still another challenge for the agencies represented here is found in the changing character of our health profile as a Nation. Increasingly, we are concerned with the impact of chronic illness, with the burden of long-term care of the crippled and disabled, with the total problem of the aged in our population, with the application of today's knowledge more widely throughout our society. Adjustment to such changing needs implies for the voluntary health and welfare agencies (as it does for the official health agencies) a flexibility and a continuity which will be even more important in the years ahead than it has in years past.

A fourth challenge, in my judgment, is the challenge to find even more effective ways to coordinate and integrate activities with those of other groups and individuals, both private and public, with parallel interests. The design in the fabric of our Nation's health and welfare services is beginning to appear, and the fabric achieves new strength as each strand is woven. It is incumbent upon each group to assure that its part has the relations with other parts to give an orderly pattern, and at the same time has the individual strength to bear its share of the burden placed on the total fabric.

Finally, I mention as a challenge the problem of identifying and motivating the individuals needed to carry out your several programs, both in terms of direct action and in terms of support. I do not need to tell you how vital dedicated people are to the success of complex missions such as yours.

Now I would like to address myself to what might be termed the "application side" of the voluntary health and welfare agency. Having met each of the five challenges I have just enumerated--which, in itself is a mammoth task--it becomes necessary to maintain a clear and continuing balance between the three-fold objectives of the health agency, namely, research, services, and education.

For the past 16 years I have been quite closely allied with health, education and welfare. In this period I have been a member of and more recently chairman of the committee in Congress responsible for the levels of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

In this role, I have developed a keen appreciation for a properly conceived and conducted balance between medical research, services, and education. I know too that the average contributor--though he may have little technical knowledge--has an awareness that research findings are of little value if they are not applied, and that he, his family and his physician can take the proper steps toward improving health practices and attitudes only after they have been adequately informed.

The general public has great faith in medical research. Each year the public supports medical research in terms of millions of dollars. It expects answers to public health problems, new cures for disease, new ways to prevent disease, and new ways to prolong life. Once some new bit of information comes to light and is translated into usable medical knowledge, it would seem reasonable to assume that very shortly the problem would virtually be resolved. Such, unfortunately, is not the case.

Let me cite some examples. Tremendous strides have been made in the past 15 years against diseases such as tuberculosis and the venereal diseases. These gains have been brought about through a combination of research knowledge, treatment, and health education. Why then do we continue to receive reports of high incidence of venereal diseases and why do we record another new case of tuberculosis every eight minutes in this country? I certainly do not have the whole answer, nor do I believe that the answer can be wrapped up in a neat little package. I do believe, however, that we might be relying too heavily on the so-called wonders of medicine such as penicillin and other antibiotics that have been so instrumental in our conquest of infectious diseases. Perhaps the mere presence of these so-called wonder drugs on the health scene has encouraged us to be lax in the prevention of infectious disease.

Another somewhat different kind of example may be cited in connection with the long-dread disease, poliomyelitis. The Salk vaccine, which has now been generally available for three years, has been proved to be safe as well as effective. The incidence of paralytic polio in this country has declined steadily for the past two years, yet a bare 50 percent of our

population considered susceptible to the disease have seen fit to be immunized against polio.

I do not wish to indict our health education activities; nor do I wish to give the impression that research findings are out-running our ability to utilize them. I do say that once we assign ourselves to the task of solving a specific public health problem, we cannot afford to relax our efforts. On the contrary, our research mechanisms frequently discover a new compound or combination of compounds that seem to provide results in diagnosis and treatment of a given disease. Very often a discovery of this kind is made before anyone has learned either the source of the disease or how it spreads. Drugs, and vaccines under these circumstances, are only palliative, so research must continue--shoulder-to-shoulder with treatment and public education--if we are to discover causes and sources and win the ultimate battle against the disease. Thus, the public health effort, from basic laboratory findings to the final and complete application of new knowledge, must include research, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment for the benefit of this and future generations.

These, then, are some of the challenges of the basic mechanism and the application of effort to the voluntary health and welfare organization today. They impose obligations on all segments of our society. Groups such as yours give one faith and confidence that the challenges can and will be met. If the breadth and extent of the challenges seem enormous, it must be remembered that both our resources and our resourcefulness are great.

Each group, and each individual within the group, must do its fair share of the job carefully and well and in complete harmony with all others

of common purpose. And I know, as you know, that the goals can be accomplished without placing in jeopardy any one of the essential freedoms of our society.

To each of you whose lives and work are linked with the preservation of health and the prevention and treatment of disease, I would convey a message of courage and hope. Americans, and people all over the world, are grateful to you for what you do.