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THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

An Era of Promise in Health

Published scientific reports and news from medical meetings across the country tell us that our health researchers are approaching major breakthroughs against the costly and heartbreaking toll of death and disease. Some of the Nation's leading medical scientists are willing to stake their professional reputations on a prediction that the next five years in medical research can be even more fruitful than the five years just past. With understanding and thoughtful support, this prediction can become a reality. Without such support, this Nation could lose its principal source of strength-- good health.

One of the basic characteristics of civilized man, in either the individual or the collective sense, is his desire for progress and his willingness to work hard and use all of the intellectual and material resources available to him in order that progress may be achieved.

In a free society, the goals that are set are the goals of the people themselves. Those of us who are given the opportunity and responsibility of helping to reach toward these goals are the agents of the people and must never lose sight of what the people want.

A member of Congress has this opportunity and responsibility in a very specific sense. As the elected representative of the people, he can serve them effectively only if he keeps their goals before him and acts in accordance with their desires.

For the past eighteen years, I have represented the people of Rhode Island in the Congress of the United States. Each year at about this time, when Congress adjourns for those fall and early winter months that are so essential in terms of the direct contact of the members with their constituents, I look back over the session of Congress that is drawing to a close, consider what it has done to help reach toward the goals of the American people, and measure my own individual performance--both with respect to the specific interests of those who have elected me to office from Rhode Island, and to those matters wherein, by seniority and choice, I represent the people of our Nation as a whole.

In any such appraisal, inevitably, there are certain areas in which the absence of progress gives rise to some dissatisfaction and frustration. I might cite, for example, the glaring failure--at least to date--to give new impetus to American education by providing Federal assistance in the construction of schools, as well as other measures related to education for tomorrow's complex and challenging world. It is my conviction that the strength of our democracy is intimately related to the strength of our educational processes, and I find it somewhat shocking that the combination of Administration lethargy and special interest pressures have resulted in national failure--failure, first, to provide adequate school facilities for the increasing numbers of boys and girls in our society and, second, failure to provide other support to decrease the teacher deficit and improve the educational opportunities for gifted students in the sciences and related fields. Here is a goal of the people which is not being met.

Another goal--one which is the special focus of these remarks--is the goal of better health.

I have been deeply impressed, both in my personal life and in my official capacities, with the vital, often paramount importance of good health to the fulfillment of one's aspirations. If the individual and those he loves do not have good health, none of the other tangible and intangible things he may have seem to matter much. On the other hand, in the presence of good health, one is better able to be a happy and contributing member of society even if he may not be fortunate enough to possess some of the other manifestations of our standard of living and way of life.

In this sense, good health is one of our common and most fundamental desires.

All of us know that our health standards as a nation are high. With the possible exception of one or two countries in northern Europe, the health status of the American people is the best in the world. But this is no reason for complacency. Such an abstract generalization is no comfort to the parents whose child is born to a life of invalidism, or to the mother whose husband dies suddenly of a heart attack in his early 40's, or to the children who see their mother wasting away and finally dying of cancer.

The challenges that lie ahead of us in the search for better health are quite clear. First, we must find ways to bring more effectively, and to more people, the benefits of today's knowledge in the prevention, control, and treatment of disease. Second, we must acquire new knowledge. Surrounding many of the diseases which cripple or prematurely kill us are great walls of

ignorance. These must be torn down and destroyed.

How, as a nation, can we reach toward the goal of better health?

We can do it by giving our support, both as individuals and as groups, to those actions and measures which represent expansion and improvement in medical and public health practice. What is involved here is more physicians, more widely distributed, to care for our growing population; modern hospitals and other medical facilities, carefully placed geographically to assure their availability to all who are in need of care; health and welfare plans which permit the best in medical care to be available to the individual without regard to his economic status; carefully designed and executed public health programs which protect the community against illness; specific measures to meet the health needs of the aged and to protect against the heavy burden of long and costly illness. Portions of such programs should be and are being carried out by action, both public and private, at the national and State levels. But the community itself is at the heart of all programs with the objective of applying today's knowledge in the prevention and treatment of disease.

The other factor in the equation for better health is the acquisition of new knowledge through medical research. I am proud to say, as I look back over the record of this and preceding years, that in its support of medical research the Congress has clearly acted in a manner that is responsive to a primary goal set by the people. And I am particularly proud that I have been privileged to have a key role in establishing the size and defining the nature

of these Federal programs.

We have sought to strengthen medical research in this country both by increasing support of today's researchers so that there may be full and effective use of the people and other resources now available, and by training young investigators and building new research facilities so that an even stronger medical research program can be carried out in the years ahead.

When the people establish their goals in a democracy and work toward the realization of those goals, they have something that is very specific, practical, and immediate in mind. In this instance, it is not the abstraction of "better health" that the people want. Rather, they want such things as freedom from the dread of cancer, from the fear of death from heart attacks, from the agonies of crippling arthritis, from the life-long disabilities associated with diseases of neurological origin, from temporary or permanent illness of the mind. They particularly want children to have every chance for normal birth and a youth free from disease that impairs or retards normal growth. And for adults, both young and old, they want not so much the simple extension of the life span, but rather the opportunity for happy and productive life without the ravages of crippling disease or the tragedy of premature death.

There is ample reason to believe that this goal can be won with well planned, intelligently supported programs.

In the first place, the record of the conquest of disease speaks for itself. We no longer see or even hear about many of the diseases which were leading causes of death in the early 1900's. And, more recently, even the

stubborn, chronic diseases which are the primary health problems we now face show signs of grudging defeat.

In the second place, the men and women of medical science--conservative though they are, and cautious to a fault--today are optimistic. But the promise for dramatic gains in the future is valid only if we continue to support medical research in the exploration of present leads and the development of new ones.

My interest in medical research as a way of reaching a goal of the American people, formalized through my committee assignment with responsibility for the programs and appropriations of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, provides me with a unique opportunity to assess where the leaders in medical research think the next major advances may be in the conquest of disease. These are not promises, but enlightened hopes. They cannot be specified on a time schedule. But is important for the people, who are the origin of the expanded support for medical research, to know where these hopes and expectations are centered.

It seems certain that there will be new ways to treat cancer with chemical and other agents, as well as improvement in treatment by radiation and surgery. New ways and improvement and extension of present methods to diagnose some forms of cancer are probable. And establishment of the virus origin of many human cancers appears imminent, leading to the hope that such cancers may be prevented.

Science seems to be getting close to an understanding of hardening of the arteries and to the development of preventive measures. In another

aspect of heart disease, understanding of the cause of high blood pressure seems probable, which will permit a rational method for its prevention and better means for its treatment. Improvements in the techniques of heart surgery and in the range of conditions susceptible to such remedial measures are certain to appear.

A number of effective viral and bacterial preventive agents, including vaccines against tuberculosis and certain upper respiratory infections, are on the horizon.

New drugs for the treatment of arthritis and rheumatism, mental illness, diabetes, and certain of the neurological disorders will be developed and brought into general use in medical practice.

Such are the hopes and expectations of those engaged in medical research. This year the Federal Government is investing nearly \$275 million of the people's money in the support of such research in order to ensure that these hopes and expectations have every opportunity of reaching fulfillment. It does so in the conviction that its actions reflect the people's wishes that rapid progress be made toward the goal of better health for more Americans and toward the potential for better health among generations to come. Aside from the freedoms on which our society rests, we could not leave a more precious heritage.

I count among my greatest blessings the privilege to serve as an agent of the people by giving support, encouragement, and direction to those Federal programs most directly concerned with our health and well-being.