

REMARKS  
by  
HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY

I deeply appreciate the privilege of meeting with your organization to discuss problems of mutual interest. Your program chairman, however, took a calculated risk in failing to assign a specific subject for discussion.

With your permission, I should like to direct my remarks to the changing problems of the environment and their increasing significance and impact on health. My reasons are two-fold: First, as an important segment of the building industry, you are in a position to influence directly many of these environmental factors. Second, as hard-headed businessmen and professional leaders in your communities you have a real responsibility for initiating and supporting health programs generally.

The press, journals, and magazines have been filled with dire predictions on the hazards associated with our population explosion, the immigration to metropolitan areas, the mental trauma and difficulties associated with urban living, and other equally disturbing forecasts. We could get quite gloomy about it all, if we didn't remind ourselves that these problems are not entirely new and that, so far at least, the American people have managed to cope with them. Our population has been increasing ever since the first colonists landed not too far from where we are meeting today. Industry has been expanding and as a result has given us the highest standard of living of any nation. The population shift has been going on ever since the first mechanization took place on the farm, as opposed to the songwriters' protestations that "Paris" was somehow involved.

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Let's admit to the changes; let's admit that, for the most part these changes have been desirable. Nevertheless, the changes now taking place create health hazards that are more complex than any we have known before and it is high time for us to devote our attention to the task of coping with them. Let's start thinking about the cities of tomorrow we are building today and how we can make them the places where we want to live. This requires new knowledge and techniques. We must step up research and we must see that the results of research are promptly used in solving the problems at hand.

The role of government in health is necessarily circumscribed. But it is a legitimate and primary concern of the Congress to establish programs for the study of health problems of national concern. It has been my privilege to be the chairman of the Congressional appropriations subcommittee that deals with public health appropriations. I have been on that committee for a period longer than any other present Member of the Congress. I am deeply grateful that, together with my House colleagues and with our sister subcommittee of the Senate, chaired by the distinguished Senator from Alabama, the Honorable Lister Hill, we have had many opportunities to contribute to the betterment of the public health. Over the years that I have worked with health officials, I have been impressed with the changing character of health problems and with the importance of keeping our public health programs adjusted to the problems of today and tomorrow.

Many of you are familiar with the Federal programs of medical research and the advances being made in finding the causes and--hopefully--the cures for cancer, heart disease, mental illness and others. The National Institutes of Health of the Public Health Service have done a remarkable job not only in conducting research but in supporting research on a nationwide basis--in medical schools, foundations and universities--to provide the answers we need.

I am proud of my part in getting them the funds they've needed. It is money well spent. For example, we used to have about 2,000 babies every year, born prematurely, who became totally blind when they were just a few weeks old. That doesn't happen anymore. We used to have about 400 babies every year who seemed normal at first but by the time they were 2 or 3 years old were idiots or morons. That problem, too, is on the way out. It used to be that if you were told you had cancer, you figured that was the end. Not anymore. Out of every 6 people who get cancer now - two are saved; and half the victims could be saved if full use were made of all the knowledge about cancer produced by research. The marvels of heart and brain surgery; the vaccines that protect against polio and soon will protect against measles--all these and other advances have come directly or indirectly as a result of the big push on medical research which began about 25 years ago when we set up the National Cancer Institute -- first of the seven big National Institutes of Health. Hundreds of thousands of people have benefitted.

But studying the effect of disease in man is only one part of the job. The other part is studying how conditions in the environment may cause disease. This part--and it is just as important--has been neglected. We are never going to clear up some of the mysteries of disease unless we launch a full scale study of the health effects of the environment. Why is it that people in some places get certain types of cancer, heart disease and other conditions that are not contagious while people in other places are spared? Take a specific example, cancer of the bladder. In some parts of Egypt this is a big problem and it has been noted that the people in these parts bathe in streams that contain infected snails that cause swimmer's itch. Offhand, you might say, the answer to this one is easy--stay out of such water. But how do you explain the fact that in some places in this country, cancer of the bladder will be twice as prevalent as in other nearby places? Particularly when there are no infected snails and no cases of swimmer's itch in either place? And why are cases of multiple sclerosis almost always found in northern communities, almost never in southern?

I don't think it is just accident that changes in the kinds of diseases that are most threatening to us today have come about just at the time when changes in our environment have been occurring most rapidly.

Let's take a moment to examine what some of those changes have been and what problems they present. The population of the United States now exceeds 180,000,000. By 1970--8 years hence--

it will approximate 215,000,000 with two-thirds of the population concentrated in metropolitan areas. The impact of this population growth on the building industry of the Nation will be tremendous. We shall have to provide housing and ancillary facilities equivalent to that of 50 cities of the size of Boston, Massachusetts. We will have to adjust to an almost continuous metropolitan area extending from Bangor, Maine to Richmond, Virginia. The logistics of the expansion will strain our capacity to provide in adequate quantity and quality the four basic elements of the environment, namely: water, air, food, and shelter.

In fact, we are already finding it hard to meet those four basic needs.

Take water. We have drinking water standards set by the Public Health Service. If water meets those standards, we know it is safe to drink. It used to be that the main thing the standard setters had to worry about was bacteria--germs that would cause typhoid fever and other contagious diseases. Just as we were getting on top of those problems, we learned that a lot of contagious diseases were caused by viruses--which are very much harder to screen out of a water supply. On top of that, the chemical industry began to grow like Topsy and a whole lot of new and potentially dangerous chemicals had to be dealt with. Then, on top of that, came radiation from fallout which also gets into the water supply. Setting water standards that will assure protection against all these hazards is getting harder and harder. And if we don't step up our research on these newer contaminants,

the day may well come when setting standards will become just plain impossible. Personally, I'm not sure that day hasn't already arrived.

And it isn't as if we could reach out some place and find water that wasn't affected by all these changes in our civilization. We have just as much, and no more, water as the first settlers had and the only reason we can get by with this limited amount is because we've learned a little about how to treat and re-use it. But we are going to have to learn a lot more because we are using more water all the time. Nature gives us about 600 billion gallons of usable water for daily use, but it doesn't distribute it to our convenience. We now use 320 billion gallons a day and by 1980 we will need to use every drop of the whole 600 billion. Water used to be cheap and plentiful and we became a wasteful Nation. Now it is scarce and costly. We wouldn't be thinking about taking the salt out of the ocean if the problem wasn't pretty serious. You know it costs about a dollar per 1,000 gallons to do that.

The problem of air is much the same as the problem of water. "Free as the air" we say, but believe me getting air that is fit to breathe in a city is far from free. I know. We have a good air pollution control program in Providence, R. I. They are working on the auto exhaust problem. They see that industries don't pollute the air unnecessarily. But even in Providence where we are spending money on this problem and getting good results, we don't have really clean air. No place does. What we most need is control of the stuff that spews out of the tailpipes of the trucks and autos, but this problem seems to get

Z priority as far as the auto industry is concerned. Finally, after being prodded and coaxed and threatened, they are at last beginning to move, but it still remains to be seen whether anything short of a Federal law requiring exhaust controls will get the kind of action we need. In Congress, we are waiting--but we are also watching.

Cutting down on the pollution caused by auto exhaust won't solve the whole problem. The fact is, we are throwing all sorts of chemicals and other pollutants into the air at a faster rate than the air currents can carry them off and we just don't know what effect all this has. Maybe it is one of the reasons why cancer, heart disease, asthma and other problems are more common in some places than in others. Maybe it isn't. Until we step up research, we won't know.

After this fine lunch, I hate to suggest to you that there are also a lot of question marks about the food we are eating these days. But there are. Think how the whole process of providing food has changed just in our own lifetimes. All the fertilizers and pesticides used on the crops. All the things that happen to food after it is harvested. For example, those trays of food they serve you on the airliners. The whole tray, except for the salad and maybe one or two other items, is stock-piled--thousands of those trays in every airport in big deep-freeze vaults. Maybe they'll stay there a year, maybe 2 or 3 years before they get loaded on a plane and popped into the quick heating unit by the stewardess who serves you. The whole thing is just about as amazing and wonderful as the jet plane itself. I'm all for it

and for all the other changes in food processing and distribution. The only thing that bothers me is that we are making them before we know what the full effects may be. What causes the million cases of food poisoning that are reported to the Public Health Service every year and the millions of others that occur but don't get reported? Are they caused because, somewhere along the line, old-fashioned methods, known to be unsafe, were used? Or are they caused because some new fashioned method was used before its dangers were discovered? We don't know and, without more research, we aren't going to find out.

Complicating all these problems--water, air, food--is that most baffling of all problems--man-made radiation. The more we study it, the more we are impressed with its dangers. Yet we can't turn the clock back. Peace or war, there is bound to be more and more radiation and the only way we can control its danger is to learn more about it. But we have barely skimmed the surface of knowledge about its health effects.

Even the simple problem of refuse disposal is creating difficulties for our metropolitan areas. Two miles out of Boston Bay is an island which many passing boatmen will agree has admirably earned its name--Spectacle Island. This island over its entire 50 acres has been the recipient for the past 37 years of much of the refuse produced by the City of Boston. It is now stacked to a height of 30 feet. This points up the growing problem all American cities face in disposing of refuse. We are currently spending some \$2 billion a year to dispose of our unwanted refuse.



The only real advance that has been made on the refuse disposal problem since the days of our grandparents we owe to your industry. We owe to you that wonderful modern device--the garbage grinder. But even if every home had a garbage grinder--and they ought to have--it would still solve only 25 percent of the refuse disposal problem. Moreover, if we are going to have a garbage grinder in every home, we have to have the kind of sewage systems that can take the load--and in most places, sewage systems are overtaxed already. You can't be for garbage grinders and against improvement and expansion of sewage systems.

I've been talking a lot about research and I've talked in terms of finding out the things we don't know. There is also some value in research that simply proves the things we think we know. It won't be any news to you people that plumbing contributes to health, but believe it or not, the solid proof of it is rather new. Studies down in Prestonburg, Kentucky, proved conclusively that families have less diarrhea and other intestinal disorders as they have more indoor plumbing. Homes with just one tap of running water had less disease than homes with none; homes with kitchen sinks and bathrooms have still less disease.

What was the point of proving this? You knew it all along. I'll tell you one point--it makes it much easier to get some serious consideration of the proposal to invest Federal funds in plumbing research. The taxpayer is not about to have his money spent for studies that will simply line your pockets. But clear-cut proof that plumbing research will help him, the taxpayer, is something else again. Health is the strongest reason why we need

Federally aided research on plumbing. But it is not the only reason. Water conservation is another reason. Economy is another. Think of the water that could be saved if 5 gallons didn't go down the drain every time anybody flushed a toilet. Think of the dollars that could be saved if plastic could safely be used for all types of pipes and for bathroom fixtures. Think of all the shelter space that could be saved--and that's money, too, when you have to think in terms of enough added population to fill 50 Bostons in just 8 more years--anyway, think of the housing space that could be saved by wall-hung toilets and other innovations.

With some solid evidence, produced through research, maybe we could even modernize the plumbing codes in this country. Most of those codes were written in the horse and buggy days and they haven't been changed since.

You can't separate out these problems. If research produces ways to get good plumbing cheaper, maybe it is going to put a little more money into your pockets, but it is also going to put more plumbing into the homes that need it and that are disease-ridden for lack of it. Some parts of plumbing research, of course, you can screen out and say it is industry's job because it is clearly to industry's benefit. But much of the needed research cannot possibly be stimulated by the profit motive. Yet it is definitely to the public's interest to have it done. It is this part of the job that I think needs the encouragement of Federal aid. And it is one of the things I would expect to see included if we can build up research in this whole field of environmental health to the proper scale.

I have a strong suspicion that a lot of these mysterious viruses, these maladies that get everybody down for a day or two and then go away and are forgotten, may be due to some kind of breaks in our sanitation defenses. Maybe some of the things that get through the water treatment plants aren't as harmless as we think. Maybe something happens as the water travels from the service line to the building to the fixture where it is used. Maybe all this interlacing of water supply and drainage pipes required by all the new houses, apartments, factories, and shopping centers we are building is causing problems we are not even aware of. This is out of my line, I admit, and I wouldn't worry about it if the people who do understand these things were working on them. But they aren't. They can't--until we decide that we are going to make the kind of a push on the environmental side that we are already making of the medical research side.

Not that everything depends on research. We could be making a lot more use of the knowledge we already have. There is no reason why we need to let our metropolitan areas grow in the haphazard way they are growing. Everyone knows that it is cheaper, in the long run, and certainly much more satisfactory to plan them. Go to the outskirts of almost any city and you'll see the slums of the future. Talk to suburbanites who thought they were going to save money with their septic tanks and private water systems. Lots of them are still paying but they are also paying for public water and sewage systems. They want to know why they weren't warned that the private system wouldn't work.

They're mad. And they have a right to be.

Your industry is intimately and directly involved in the construction of the homes, the factories, the commercial establishments and the other physical facilities which, when added together, constitute the environment in which our population lives.

You can be tremendously influential in seeing that your communities are planned communities with built-in features that will assure health, beauty and pleasant living for generations yet to come.

I am confident you are throwing your influence in that direction and that you will continue to do so. And I want to assure you that I, too, am doing and will continue to do everything I can in Congress. I want to be sure that the Federal government doesn't take on that part of the job which rightly belongs to industry and to States and communities. But I want to be equally sure that it doesn't fail to do that part of the job which only the Federal government can do.

I urge you, as I urge the people down in Washington, to get on with the job. The longer we let these problems accumulate, the bigger they will grow, and the tougher it will be to deal with them. We've drifted too long. It's time, it's overtime, for action.

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