

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE IN DENTAL EDUCATION

There is an air of excitement and expectancy at the opening of a new school which is distinctive--which sets an occasion such as this apart from every other. I think I know why this is so. It is because we in this country look upon our educational system, upon our schools, as the embodiment of all that is best in our way of life. Our schools are where our past and future meet.

It is in the classrooms that we pay proud homage to our past, that we instill in our sons and daughters a reverence for our heritage of intellectual, spiritual and political freedoms; we do so in the belief that they will cherish these things, and build upon them and keep them alive and vigorous. It is in our classrooms that we acknowledge the debt which the present owes the future, that we bequeath to our young people whatever knowledge we have gained; we do so in the hope that they will succeed where we have failed, that they will learn what we have hardly dreamed of, that they will use what they learn with a wisdom we ourselves have never quite attained.

When the school we dedicate is one such as this--an institution devoted to the teaching of one of the great health sciences, a college of dentistry occupying its logical place in the medical complex of a great university--when the school is such a school as the College of Dentistry of the University of Kentucky, then our sense of pride in our accomplishments and our hope for the future are further deepened and enriched. For, of the vocations we profess, our society honors the health sciences, the healing arts, almost above all others.

We admire our physicians and dentists for the advances they have made in the battle against disease and pain. We depend upon them for the protection of that health and vitality which we know is so essential to our well-being as individuals and our survival as a democratic people. We entrust our lives to them.

Remarks of the Honorable John E. Fogarty, Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Rhode Island, at the dedication of the University of Kentucky College of Dentistry, A.B. Chandler Medical Center, Lexington, Kentucky, on September 28, 1962.

Because we so esteem the health sciences and so depend upon them, we have come to regard access to the best possible medical and dental care as a basic human right and a right which must be more fully exercised and more jealously protected. And we regard anything which threatens that right as a matter of national concern.

Laymen as well as members of the health professions are therefore deeply disturbed over the shortage of dentists and physicians--a developing shortage of manpower which is in essence a long-lived shortage of dental and medical schools. We tell ourselves that ours is the healthiest Nation on earth. But then we look at statistics such as those amassed by the dental profession and learn that ours is also a Nation where 160 million people suffer some form of dental disease, where almost 100 million have tooth decay and 23 million have periodontal disease and 21 million have suffered total loss of teeth. We learn that 65,000 of our children are disfigured and maimed by cleft lip or palate, that 23,000 people fall victim to oral cancer each year and that most of them eventually die because of it.

We read figures like these, and then we read that in spite of the universality of dental disease only 40 per cent of us see a dentist in a given year. And we read that the amount of dental services provided in this year or any year will not be enough to offset the new dental needs that have developed during the same period. Is it any wonder, then, that laymen agree with professional leaders when they call the manpower shortage a major health problem in itself? That we are disturbed by the lag in basic and applied research programs, particularly in dental science?

And is it any wonder that laymen share the professions' concern for the need to develop new modes and facilities for the delivery of health services? Without new approaches, scarce professional skills may be wasted on routine duties someone else could perform. Without new approaches, the move toward specialization in dentistry and medicine may end not in the intensification and more effective application of scientific knowledge, but in its fragmentation. We see no advantage in the perpetuation of a tradition in which the dentist does, indeed, "look at the mouth as if there were no man" and the physician looks at the man "as if there were no mouth."

Members of the public are concerned--and rightly so--about problems such as these. We are also convinced--and rightly so--that they can and will be solved. And, since we think of education as an open-sesame to a better way of life, it is only natural that we should look to our educators and to our educational institutions for leadership in the search for solutions.

Even so, we have long since learned that implicit in the enunciation of a right is the assumption of responsibility, that implicit in a call for leadership is the pledge of our support. The public must bear its share of the burden which progress imposes on us all. What can be accomplished when the professions and the public work together in an enthusiastic and intelligent partnership is given enduring expression in the dental school we dedicate today.

The people of the State of Kentucky have made possible the building of this college of dentistry. It is their contribution to the solution of one of the most critical health problems plaguing this State--a shortage and maldistribution of dentists which in many remote areas and for many years has meant the denial of a basic health service to thousands of people. Because they know the value of dental services and the cost of going without them, because they realized the futility of depending upon other schools in other States for the dentists they must have, the citizens of Kentucky accepted and acted upon their responsibility to solve their own manpower problems and to bring care to their own people. This dental school is the result of their action.

It is equally significant that what we dedicate here is not simply a dental school but a school which is an integral part of a great and comprehensive medical center. Here students of medicine and nursing, dentistry and dental hygiene will be instructed in their professions side by side; here they share alike the advantages of modern laboratories, a well-equipped library, and a fine teaching hospital. Surely, in a setting such as this, it will be possible to maintain that independence so necessary to scientific progress within each of the health professions while achieving, at the same time, the intellectual cross-fertilization so basic to the realization of the ideal we call total health, so necessary to the welfare of the patient. Surely, out of Kentucky's College of Dentistry will come practitioners who by breadth of education and experience, and by inclination are fully qualified members of a comprehensive

health team. Surely you can expect from this center the stimulus and leadership required to bring many groups together in the building of strong programs of public action and education, in the achievement of improved health for all Kentuckians in all parts of the State.

You are right to be proud of your new dental college. In building it, you have assured a better future for your own State, and you have established a pattern which must be followed by other States across the Nation--States in the South and in my native New England, States in the Middle and Far West. These States, too, are faced with a crisis in manpower and in professional education. They, too, must achieve an expansion of school facilities and a modernization of teaching concepts.

In many instances, the job to be done is far more complex than that which you faced in Kentucky. And in total, the need for professional training facilities is so great and so costly that it can only be viewed as a national problem and a national responsibility.

It does not detract from your own achievement to point out that one-third of the cost of this entire medical center--a sum far in excess of the cost of the dental school itself--was paid by the Federal Government--by the whole of the American people. You were fortunate in this regard. But not every dental school to be built can be a component of a medical complex. And so limited is the Federal aid otherwise available that, without the passage of legislation providing specific Federal support for their construction, most of the dental schools we need in this country will never be built at all.

I have done what I can do to secure Federal aid for professional education. I have introduced legislation which provided funds not only for the construction and operation of schools but--equally important--for the scholarships which would enable our gifted students to secure the education they deserve. I have supported Administration-sponsored legislation which would go far toward achieving the same ends. I look upon the failure of the Congress to pass one or another of these bills as little short of disastrous. We do not solve problems by ignoring them; we only contribute further to their complexity.

I hold no brief--and, evidently, neither do you--I hold no brief for the argument that Federal aid to education means Federal interference in the educational process. What to teach and how to teach it is best determined by the professional educator, and by him alone. At the same time, a freedom from interference should not be confused with an immunity to criticism. For the American people do have a real and vital interest in the end product of the educational system. We have a right to ask that the dental students of Kentucky and the dental hygiene students of Rhode Island and the students of other disciplines in other States be given an education which will equip them for the future--because that future depends upon them.

I have no doubt that what we ask, we will receive. The awareness that more and more talented young people can and should be recruited into dentistry; the growing understanding that good health can only mean total health; the new emphasis upon the prevention of dental disease through stronger research programs; the progress being made in caring for the aged and the ill and the disabled; the efforts to achieve a more widespread and efficient use of auxiliary skills, the insistence that the gulf between the need and demand for dental services can be narrowed--all these are evidence that we expect no more of our practitioners and our educators than they intend to give.

Like every school which has ever been built, the College of Dentistry of the University of Kentucky is symbolic of many things--of aims achieved, of new beginnings and new goals. It is a lasting testament to the leadership of men like Governor Chandler, who conceived this center which bears his name, and of Governor Combs, who has seen the school through to completion. It is both challenge and responsibility for men like President Dickey and Dean Morris, who must set its course from this point forward. For the students who will receive their professional education here, it will become what they themselves choose to make it. On a day like this, it is possible to hope that they will make of it one of the great institutions of dental science and learning. But we ask only that they do their best, that they come here determined to follow knowledge wherever it may lead, that they leave here "strong in will to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." Then the people of Kentucky will know that the school they have built is well-used, and the future well-served.