

REMARKS*

by

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House of Representatives, U. S. Congress

It is a matter of special pride for me when the people of my State, in partnership with the Federal government, take an important stride forward for better health.

Here at South County Hospital, in the fine new wing we dedicate today, you are making such an advance. And in doing so, you are moving with the mainstream of medical thinking. For this expansion was planned to incorporate three of the basic principles that must be built into our medical future.

First, it will enable the hospital to serve more people.

Second, it will serve them better.

Third, it will serve them more efficiently, permitting more effective use of the time, energy and skills of the hospital staff.

In this dramatic decade, these are the fundamental challenges before the health professions.

We must serve more people, because there are more people in need of health care. Thanks in large part to the brilliant advances in knowledge of the communicable diseases--products of the first wave of medical research--and their widespread application, we are witnessing an enormous growth in population. And the two fastest-growing components are the very young and the very old--precisely the two groups who require the greatest amount of medical service.

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Second, we must serve people better, because we have so much more to offer. The Nation's laboratories are pouring forth a steady and swelling stream of discoveries. The surgeon's knife can enter where it never could before--even into the living heart. Drugs can now save lives that would have been beyond hope only a few short years ago. New advances in restorative medicine can return to happy, productive lives persons who otherwise would be doomed to the half-life of invalidism.

But modern medicine is complex, and costly. To do the whole job--diagnose, cure and restore--demands the highly skilled services of many health professionals. It requires continuity of care, so that people may receive the service they need, when and where they need it.

These two factors--the growing number of people to be served and the complexity of individual cases--put a heavy strain on our already over-burdened doctors, nurses, and their professional allies. Hence the third aspect of the challenge--to serve people more efficiently. Hospitals must be designed to provide maximum service while making the greatest possible use of the energy and skills of the staff.

South County Hospital has been re-shaped and expanded with these ends in view. You have added to the bed capacity of the hospital and improved its capability for modern surgery. You have provided new diagnostic and treatment facilities. And, by relocating several key services, you have enhanced the efficient operation of the entire hospital.

I referred in my opening remarks to the partnership between the people of this community and the Federal government. Throughout the Nation, the grand alliance of local, State and Federal resources has revolutionized hospital care in less than two decades. Since 1946, when Congress passed the original Hill-Burton Act, more than 6,200 hospitals and other medical facilities have been built or expanded across America, including about 3,800 general hospitals.

Here in our own State of Rhode Island, the 45 approved Hill-Burton projects have included 26 general hospitals, plus such essential components of a health care program as diagnostic and treatment centers, chronic disease facilities, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, and mental hospitals.

Nationwide, the Federal contribution to these projects has been about one-third of the cost. Here in Rhode Island--and this is also a source of pride to me--State and local resources have accounted for more than three-quarters of the necessary funds.

But the improvement of hospital care is only part of the story. What our grand alliance has done for hospitals it must now extend to the entire community. The same principles that have animated the forward march of hospital service--better care for more people, more efficiently delivered--are now being applied beyond the hospital's walls.

Last year the Congress passed the Community Health Services and Facilities Act as an essential legislative step toward this goal. States,

communities, and non-profit agencies may now apply to the Public Health Service for assistance in the development of new and improved programs designed to bring health care within reach of people where they need it most--in their homes, in nursing homes and other types of facilities, or in hospitals designed to meet special needs. The initial response to this new opportunity for creative local leadership has been heartening, rich in promise for improving patterns of health service.

No community anywhere has yet achieved, or even closely approached, the ideal pattern--necessary health services, readily available to all the people, delivered efficiently by an adequate supply of health professionals. But many are moving steadily and swiftly in the right direction. I salute the many men and women present whose thoughtful and constructive plan has now been brought to reality in the building we dedicate today. And I look forward with all of you to continued progress in bringing better health care to the people of this community, Rhode Island, and the Nation.

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