

A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

It was my privilege, a few weeks ago, to speak at the dedication of a new dental school at the University of Kentucky. There was, on that occasion, an air of excitement and expectancy that made it memorable. There was a sense of beginning, of setting forth, which I would expect few other occasions to equal. But today I find this air of excitement and expectancy immeasurably heightened. And I think that I know why.

It is more than just a new building being dedicated here today. It is an old and honored institution dedicating itself anew to the pursuit of excellence.

Symbolized in this research center is a new commitment by a school of dentistry with nearly a century long tradition of service -- a renewed pledge to its alumni, its community, its students that this school, through those who serve in it, will strive in the future as it has in the past to extend the frontiers of scientific knowledge, to employ knowledge wisely and effectively, and in both the search for the new and the application of the old, to lead and not to follow.

A reaffirmation such as this implies a thoughtful reappraisal, an assessment not just of past accomplishments and present needs, but of future goals and the prospects of achieving them. The School of Dentistry here at Washington University has completed a searching and

Remarks of the Honorable John E. Fogarty, Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Rhode Island, at the dedication of the Research Addition to the School of Dentistry at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, on November 14, 1962.

critical self-appraisal. Justly proud of its past, but disturbed with its present and concerned for its future, the School has developed a program of action aimed at maintaining its position of leadership and its standard of excellence. It has done so that it might continue to serve the cause of dentistry -- and to serve it well in a future full of challenge. The opening of this Research Center today marks the completion of the first step in this program of development.

That the School has chosen to begin with an expansion of its facilities for research is significant. For research conducted in the setting of a great university promises not only the furtherance of knowledge but the enrichment of that institution and its educational programs. And this, in the end, could prove nearly as meaningful to the school and the profession it serves as the discoveries that are made here.

To these laboratories, this library, will come students from all parts of the country. For some, access to this facility may well mean a strengthening of their resolve to strive for the knowledge and the understanding which make of them truly healing scientists. Others will find here the intellectual stimulus which awakens their spirit of inquiry, leading them to pursue careers in basic or applied research. Still others will have kindled here the desire to teach.

This is a good and necessary thing. The nation has a critical need for dental scientists of breadth and vision who are willing to devote their lives to teaching and research. Unless we have such

men and women -- and have them in large and increasing numbers -- we cannot hope to solve what has become the most crucial of the health problems we face -- the shortage of professional manpower.

For if we are to do no more than maintain today's inadequate level of dentist supply, we must build -- and staff -- an additional 22 new dental schools, each of them at least twice the size of the Washington school. And we must do so within the span of 10 short years. At the same time, we must make it possible for existing schools to expand, finding for them the added staff their additional students will require.

This center, by preparing students for careers in dental education, will help make possible this expansion in school capacity which we so urgently need. With the completion of the next step of your development program, you will make still a further contribution. The remodeling of your old building will, I understand, allow you to offer for the first time a training program for dental hygienists. It will also permit a modest expansion in your undergraduate dental student enrollment.

This is an expansion that we badly need, and I find it heartening that you are prepared to do everything that you are able to do to increase opportunities for training. But I find it even more heartening that it is your concern for excellence in all you do that has defined the limits of what is possible.

Surely, neither you in dental education nor those of us who share your concern for the future of dentistry can afford the luxury of assuming that having more schools and bigger schools is an end in itself. It is not. We must also have better schools, schools tailored

not after the pattern of the past but cut to a new mold, able to adapt to changing philosophies and concepts of teaching and treatment, schools fully capable of preparing their students for the more demanding roles the future will impose.

The price of progress is high. Unless the public bears its share of the cost, we cannot hope to see accomplished all that we know to be essential. To build new schools, to enlarge existing ones, to ensure quality in all -- this is an undertaking so vast in scope and, in total, so costly that it must be acted upon as a national responsibility.

This Center we dedicate today is lasting evidence of what can be accomplished when the public, acting through its elected representatives, assumes its rightful share of the burden. That you have not yet begun the remodeling of your old building is, by the same token, an example of the public's default on its legitimate obligations. For just as surely as the Health Research Facilities Act has made possible the completion of this building, the lack of similar assistance for teaching facilities has slowed your progress in renovating and modernizing your dental school proper.

The truth is, that unless Congress recognizes that the shortage of dental manpower is a national problem and enacts legislation which provides specifically for the assistance of dental education, far too much of what needs to be done will be long delayed or will never be done at all. It is small wonder therefore that layman and professional leaders alike are deeply disturbed over the continuing failure of the Congress to enact such vital legislation.

For my part, I plan to do all that I can to assure its passage in this next session of the Congress. I will again introduce a measure which I have proposed before, a bill which would provide wide-ranging support for dental school construction -- support not just for the building of new schools and the expansion of the old, but support for schools like yours, which would remodel and modernize almost solely for the purpose of providing a better education for the numbers they now enroll.

In addition, I will again propose two other measures which, while bringing us closer to the goal of more adequate supply, will also help you attain the higher standards of dental education which your development program envisions. The first of these is a bill to provide operating grants to dental schools. Although this measure will include an incentive for expanding enrollments, its real purpose is to provide schools with the funds they need to improve the quality of their instruction.

The second measure is a scholarship bill which will permit dentistry to compete on an equal footing with other disciplines for students of intellectual stature. For this school at this time, I suggest that such assistance would have particular meaning. This is, in a sense, a national school, drawing its students from as far away as Hawaii. This is also, however, a school located in the State of Missouri and owing its special debt to this State.

In this State there is a population which is fast outgrowing its dentist supply; and one of the major reasons that this is true is simply

that too small a proportion of Missouri's youth -- smaller by far than the national average -- seek to enter a dental college. Could you not, if scholarships were available for promising youths, seek out students in the State who might otherwise be lost to the profession? A student trained under such a program might well return to become his hometown's only dentist.

Unfortunately, not all of our problems can be solved so simply. Even if the Congress enacts legislation providing financial assistance in all of the areas I have outlined, we cannot guarantee adequate standards of dental health. The manpower goal we have set for ourselves is a minimum goal, falling far short of the number we will need just to meet anticipated levels of demand, and dentists of the future will be hard pressed to provide care for all who seek it. Certainly they could not begin to provide care for all who need it. Need is nearly universal, and until we succeed in reducing its level, many who need care will be denied this vital health service.

Yet to achieve within a decade the improvement in manpower supply which is our goal will represent a major accomplishment. We must therefore intensify our search for ways to prevent and control dental disorders. One investigator, if he should discover a means of preventing or reducing periodontal disease, for example, might do more for oral health than several thousand additional practitioners of restorative dentistry. Perhaps this discovery will be made here in this new center we dedicate today. More likely it will not. For great moments of discovery are few. And when they occur, they are more often than not simply the culmination of a series of discoveries made by dedicated men and women in their day-to-day pursuit of knowledge. It is not impossible to hope

nor indeed to expect that ultimately the discoveries of those who labor here will end in the eradication or control of some dental disease. Our hope and expectancy are the greater because this center is an integral part of the Washington University School of Dentistry. And as such, it is at once heir to the school's traditions and symbol of their vitality. It could ask no better beginning.