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19 November 1954

Mrs. Albert D. Lasker
The Lasker Foundation
3313 Chrysler Building
New York 17, New York

Dear Mrs. Lasker:

On July 27th I sent you a brief report on the Southern Regional Conference on Mental Health Training and Research held in Atlanta July 21st to 24th. At that time, I pointed out that 170 official delegates from 16 states had adopted a series of sweeping recommendations for a new attack upon mental illness in the South. According to Dr. Nicholas Hobbs, director of the mental health project, these recommendations were the end result of intensive work by more than 2,000 professional and lay people in the Southern area.

Things have been moving at a breakneck speed since then. At a Legislative Work Conference in Houston on September 16th, key legislators from the Southern States not only enthusiastically endorsed the major training and research recommendations, but requested legislative participation in any organization set up to achieve the Atlanta objectives.

The climax was reached at the Southern Governors' Conference at Boca Raton, Florida November 11-13th. The Chief Executives of the 16 member states voted to establish a Regional Council on Mental Health Training and Research financed by an annual contribution of \$8,000 from each participating state. The Council will employ a highly qualified technical staff to further the 14 specific training and research objectives listed by the Governors. The major objectives include increased state legislative appropriations for mental health research and training; regional compacts and arrangements for both the training of professional personnel and the development of regional mental health research centers; training and research fellowships, either at the state or regional level, and the organization of regional conferences to stimulate interest in mental health research and training among key legislators and citizens.

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Purpose: Through a broad educational campaign, to create public understanding and support of the 10-point Bill of Rights for the mentally ill adopted by the 1954 National Governors' Conference on Mental Health. To convince the American people to actively support federal, state and local preventive mental health programs emphasizing research, training and expanded clinic and community services designed to treat and cure mental illness in its early stages.

It is also important to remember that each of the 16 Southern States has completed an exhaustive survey of its mental health research and training potential. The recommendations of these individual state survey committees call for the expenditure of additional millions of dollars in the launching of research projects and the training of increased professional personnel within state boundaries. The Atlanta Conference recommended the continuance of these state research and training committees on a permanent basis, and a number of Governors have already taken such action.

The South is the first region to mount a cooperative attack upon mental illness, but the idea is catching on rapidly in other parts of the country. In the Midwest, two preliminary meetings have been held and 10 Midwestern states have completed research and training surveys leading up to a Midwestern Governors' Conference on Mental Health November 30th in Chicago. In the Far West, 80 legislators and administrative officials from the 11 Western states met late in September and voted for a survey of mental health training and research facilities in that area. In New England, a regional compact on higher education has been signed by the participating state Chief Executives. At a conference of Northeastern mental health authorities early in October, proposals for regional mental health agreements were discussed.

The National Mental Health Committee is very proud of its role in these historic activities. It is particularly grateful to its honorary chairmen, the 40 State Governors, who have displayed great leadership in furthering our common objectives. I will keep you posted on regional developments in other parts of the country. I enclose reprints of two NEW YORK TIMES Sunday columns written by Dr. Howard A. Rusk.

Cordially,



Mike Gorman
Executive Director

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Enclosures