THE ROLE OF CONGRESS IN PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH*

It is a pleasure to be with you this evening. The fine program presented today by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has provided an interesting opportunity to consider public health research from a perspective of 75 years. In reviewing the many fine accomplishments of the Public Health Service in the field of microbiology, you are considering also present trends and the probable course of future developments in biomedical research.

The past years of progress, of course, have been merely preamble--one of the great chapters in the continuing drama of Public Health Service history.

I am accustomed to looking back over the 20 years during which I have been a legislator closely associated with the programs of the Public Health Service. There are many reasons to be proud of the record that you, yourselves, have established during this time, and the record of Congress in progressive health legislation. Tonight, however, I join with you in paying tribute to our pioneers of microbiological research on this 75th anniversary of the founding by Dr. Joseph Kinyoun of the Service's Laboratory of Hygiene in 1887 at Staten Island. The names of some of you have been mentioned rather reverently in an "old boy" frame of reference; but I am afraid your being here today disqualifies you as "early pioneers."

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*Presented by Congressman John E. Fogarty at the Dinner, 75th Anniversary of PHS research in microbiology, held at Naval Officers Club, National Naval Medical Center, November 29, 1962, Bethesda, Maryland.

When I first became a member of the House Subcommittee concerned with appropriations for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare those 20 years ago, we were concerned mainly with the control of infectious and communicable diseases. The viruses which so occupy your attention today were obscure microbes; but at least it was generally admitted that they existed.

In contrast, I understand that in Dr. Kinyoun's time people had not quite accepted the fact that harmful bacteria really existed. Plagues were still thought to come from vapors rising from unpleasant sources--and our port cities still suffered from outbreaks of imported diseases that killed thousands. This is an old story to you, I know, but to Dr. Kinyoun, first demonstrating the cholera vibrio in immigrants coming into the country, it was a new challenge.

At that time, more faith was placed in mustard plasters and other home remedies than in professional medical research and disease prevention. This negative attitude had been around quite a while. At the birth of our Nation, Congress was occupied with expedient rather than constructive medical measures--history records, for example, deliberations on whether to vote twelve dollars for a woman who had nursed two Revolutionary War soldiers with smallpox!

Today we still have twelve-dollar thinkers amongst us, who seem more concerned with the therapy of damage than with disease prevention.

Yet, I am sure that even in Dr. Kinyoun's relatively unenlighted time, the typical American fighting spirit of "millions for defense but not one cent for tribute" was only dormant. When these early pioneers and their successors--including some of you here today--revealed the microbial causes

of our infectious diseases, we began to fight back in earnest. Today, for example, we are trying to replace a 3 billion dollar annual tribute exacted of us by respiratory diseases with a National Vaccine Development Program against these infections.

But it was a number of years before Dr. Kinyoun's efforts and the medical achievements in microbiology of the nineteenth century inspired the Congress of that day to appropriate funds for the laboratory. The first appropriation of $35,000 in 1901 was to be used--and the wording of the Act is significant--"for the investigation of infectious and contagious disease, and matters pertaining to public health."

Congress had now given the Service a mandate to concern itself no longer solely with the plight of disabled seamen, as the original Marine Hospital Service had envisioned. Following this, as you recall, the Marine Hospital Service evolved into the present-day Public Health Service. The Laboratory of Hygiene became the present-day National Institutes of Health, and especially your National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and Division of Biologics Standards, direct descendents of the old laboratory.

I want also to cite here the well-established and productive research programs being conducted by the U. S. Public Health Service Hospitals under whose aegis the early Laboratory of Hygiene was established.

The programs of the USPHS Hospitals form a vital, intrinsic part of the overall research effort of today's Public Health Service.

Public health research in Dr. Kinyoun's time seems to have been a kind of guerrilla warfare against the unknown. I sense that today medical research and education is a vast staging area for advances in public health that will equal or surpass the dramatic accomplishments in infectious disease research of the past era.

Let me digress for just a moment to point out that, unfortunately, we have not progressed in some respects. Dr. Kinyoun, examining the waters of the Potomac River, reported that it was "contaminated with sewage." To say that we haven't solved this particular problem yet is perhaps the under statement of the century. But the fact that the Congress in recent years has begun to take broad-scale, definitive action against such problems is a matter of pride to me. In water pollution research and control, for example, there has been more than a 700 percent increase in funds available in the past five years!

In broad perspective, though, the benefits to public health of microbiological research have been tremendous. When Dr. Kinyoun first went to work in his laboratory, life expectancy at birth was about 40 years; today it is 70 years.

In a sense, we are now merely reinvesting in medical research the dividends from past research gains. Dr. Kinyoun, the bacteriologists he trained for public health work, and their successors of contemporary times have enabled us to hold the line against age-old plagues. Now we venture forth from a more secure position to challenge heart disease, cancer, mental illness and other chronic illnesses, to explore radiology, to begin the great task of applying new knowledge to community and environmental health.

I am proud of the role of Congress as a catalyst through which public aspirations and scientific acumen have produced human well-being. No one group can claim full credit, though many now participate in and add to the total of our progress. As Chairman of the Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations for the Department of Labor and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, I have participated each year in the deliberations concerning the levels of support for our national medical research effort. The increasing appropriations for this purpose have undoubtedly stimulated not only Public Health Service research but also the entire field of biomedical research and education throughout the country.

The support provided by Congress in response to the mandate of our people is not entirely composed of tools and treasure. Our Hearings have provided an impetus for the Nation's medical authorities to formulate and express their goals and their problems. The legislators have listened to the people, to the physicians, to basic scientists, to economists, public health educators, and Republicans too, because these programs--as they should be--are essentially non-political in nature. The milestones of progress mark not only research accomplishments with which you are familiar, but also legislative accomplishments in nourishing medical research. An attentive, responsible and responsive Congress has, year by year, succeeded in raising the annual appropriations in support of Public Health Service research activities and related programs. None of this was achieved without difficulty, nor without Congress having first assured itself that continued support of the Nation's medical research programs, with NIH as the focal point, was desirable and necessary.

In his special health message to Congress last year President Kennedy commented that "the health of our Nation is a key to its future...to its economic vitality, to the morale and efficiency of its citizens, to our success in achieving our own goals and demonstrating to others the benefits of a free society."

Would not Dr. Kinyoun, prophet though he was, be amazed that more than three thousand scientists and other professional workers are now with the National Institutes of Health, that more than thirty thousand employees in 250 occupations are at work with the Public Health Service, and that support for Public Health Service activities has passed the billion dollar mark.

I had thought that this evening I might pay tribute to our host, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, by recounting some of the research advances of this Institute as reflected in the testimony of recent years. But I believe most of you are well aware of this progress, particularly in the field of virus vaccines, and especially against respiratory viruses.

This is the Institute which has had the fortitude to challenge the unconquerable common cold with real expectations of eventually conquering it. I understand that this will not be an easy task and that early optimism because of initial successes against respiratory viruses has been replaced with quiet determination. The partnership with the Public Health Service of pharmaceutical industry and academic research groups and medical research centers such as the Children's Hospital research group here in Washington bodes well for the success of this venture in terms of useful vaccines. I have learned, however, to expect step-by-step disability-sparing and lifesaving gains from medical research rather than panaceas and startling breakthroughs.

For my part, as a member of Congress, I intend to challenge you to extend your lines of advance farther perhaps than you believe is feasible. But I will do my utmost to provide the logistical support you need.

I realize, of course, that expanded research facilities and adequate appropriations are only a part of the picture. The Nation must by 1970 double the number of professional investigators if we are to meet our future estimated need for medical research. Legislation looking toward increased support for medical education is scheduled for early consideration by the Congress in the coming session.

I am certain that during the next seventy-five years the productive partnership between the Congress and the Public Health Service will result in untold benefits for the American people.

I understand that you people plan to have a hundredth anniversary celebration about twenty-five years from now. I hope that it will be a victory celebration to observe the passing of the common cold; I hope that you will have achieved the complete control of viruses; the obliteration of the fungal diseases; the understanding and control of conditions we call allergies; and I hope that you will have helped extend this knowledge for the benefit of people everywhere.

And I hope you will invite me to that celebration, too. Thank you.