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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE

December 27, 1955

Michael E. De Bakey, M.D.
Chairman, Department of Surgery
Texas Medical Center
Baylor University
Houston, Texas

Dear Dr. De Bakey:

I had already been advised of the decision made by the Secretary of Defense to drop from the Defense construction budget the funds requested for the Armed Forces Medical Library, and I certainly agree with your contention that this action strengthens the case for those who believe in the creation of a separate national library of medicine. Your letter, I am sure, will carry great weight with Senators Hill and Kennedy when the Congress reconvenes and they meet to consider the work we have done on this to date.

I am particularly gratified for your thoughtfulness in setting forth your views as to the objectives which we should seek to attain in creating such a national library. The bill which is currently being drafted by our Legislative Counsel and which, as I have said, we shall certainly submit to you for your criticisms, does spell out as one of the functions of the library the regular publication of the three indices your letter mentions (I stole the phraseology from one of your earlier published articles).

I wonder, however, and I am sure that all of our consultants will want to give great thought to the desirability of setting forth so specific an assignment in what we hope will be permanent legislation. I would assume that the Board of Regents of a national library of health could be counted on to carry on any such function so long as it continued to prove of value to medicine. It is conceivable, however, that over the years new developments or changing patterns might make any one or perhaps even all three of these particular indices of very little value. Consequently, I am wondering whether we would not perhaps be better advised to mention these three indices and their current value in the report which

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the legislative committee would make in reporting out the bill creating a national library as indicative of the sort of function we would expect the library to perform. I would assume that, as in most similar cases, this would be a clear indication to the Board of Regents of the institution that these indices should be published regularly until such time as events prove them no longer necessary, and that the latter decision, in view of an expressed Congressional opinion, would not be taken lightly. I should appreciate having your thoughts with respect to this question.

Many thanks for your best wishes, and I do hope that the New Year will prove a very pleasant one to you.

Sincerely yours,

William G. Reidy
Professional Staff Member

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