

Remarks of Assistant Surgeon General Walter L. Treadway
of the United States Public Health Service, on the
Occasion of Dedicating the Federal Hospital at
Springfield, Missouri, September 22, 1933.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director, Distinguished Guests, and
Friends and Neighbors of this Institution:

We have gathered here today for the significant and serious purpose of dedicating an enterprise having humanitarian, and, practical and scientific objectives. Surgeon General Cumming of the Public Health Service has asked me to express his sincere regrets for his inability to attend these ceremonies in person. I am glad of this opportunity, however, both personally and officially, to join you in these exercises. Under such circumstances it is appropriate that we indulge those who have been instrumental in bringing this institution to its present state, and we hail with expectation the functions it is designed to perform. As an institution it occupies a significant place in the evolution of public policies affecting the treatment and amelioration of disease and illness, and also in the development of a coordinate system of correctional procedure. It has been designed primarily for the care and treatment of the sick who have committed offenses against the United States, including those who are mentally ill and those who are afflicted with chronic and protracted physical disease. Specially designed facilities were, and still are contemplated for the tuberculous.

The people of Missouri, and of Springfield in particular, are to be commended for their interest and attitude toward the establishment of this hospital. It illustrates a spirit of cooperation characteristic of the American people. Aside from the United States, perhaps, there is no other country in the world where men and women have exhibited, in more striking form, that sympathy and helpfulness for alleviating suffering, for rectifying wrong,

and for setting the weak in the way of strength and hope. Such a spirit has built up a great system of government, standing in many respects as a model for those who seek to set liberty upon a firm foundation.

There is, however, more in the conception of this hospital than the mere housing or domiciliary care of prisoners. It represents a medical center with all those diversified facilities which the broad activities and interest of modern medical science and the treatment of the sick entails. It represents even more than individual services for those admitted, for it is an aspect of specialization aiming at the solution of a special social problem confronting organized society. The role this institution occupies in the scheme of our social order has behind it a continuous evolutionary growth of more than three centuries. During that period civilization has endeavored to set up coordinate public policies directed toward solving the problems of those who cannot meet adversity, illness, or cope with the liberal standards of conduct maintained by society.

To understand this long and tedious growth, it must be appreciated that betterment in the social, moral, economic, or commercial conduct of a self-governing people springs, not from the mind of any one person, but from congregate opinions and crystallized wishes of generations. Notwithstanding the sudden emergence of so-called reform movements, they are always based upon a framework that is deeply rooted in a background of tradition and custom, and flavored, perhaps, by the spirit of the times.

As populations increased and our communities grew older, their isolation gradually gave way, and with it there was no escape from the constant increase in the number of those who for various reasons became charges upon the

general public. At first communities endeavored to dispose of them as cheaply as possible through indenture or by allowing the public to offer terms for their support. The practice of auctioning these public charges to the lowest bidder gradually lost ground, and out of it arose the policy of indoor relief. For many decades almshouses and jails were the only public institutions housing people who could not provide against adversity or cope with the customs of society.

The almshouses, originally built and maintained to shelter and care for the poor and helpless, gathered together under a single roof all manner of persons. There was the widowed and the aged who were incapable of self-support; the little children left orphans or sired by incompetents; the idiot, the epileptic, and the feeble-minded; the deaf and the dumb, who were the grinning butt of public ridicule; the "maniacs" and "harmless insane"; the lame, the crippled, the chronically diseased, and the blind. All were gathered together under the same inclosure.

Admissions to such almshouses did not stop with the helpless and worthy ones. Among these were thrown the vagabond, the tramp, the petty thieves, and other delinquents and criminals, the vagrant class, the prostitute brought to her lying-in, the drunkard and drug addict, the venereally diseased, the tuberculous, and others with communicable diseases.

Public interest was focused on this situation, partly because of its inhumane aspect, but more especially because of the increasing drain on the public treasury. It became obvious from public demands, that some means must be found to decrease or at any rate, to stem the tide of this drain on public coffers. Thus there began a period of specialization from which evolved various systems, schemes, and eventually public policies and facilities to meet the needs, or assumed needs, of these various groups as special problems.

The first attempt at specialization was stimulated by an insistent demand that the able bodied poor, the sturdy vagabond, and the delinquent or criminal should be put to work and made to contribute something to his self-support. In consequence, there developed, on the one hand, special facilities and policies to meet the assumed needs of the helpless and the sick poor, and on the other hand, facilities for the more able bodied who could not conform to the standards of conduct maintained by society. Thus the evolution of facilities and public policies governing aid from the public treasuries of American communities had their beginnings in what appeared to be two distinct groups, first, the helpless poor or almshouse group, and second, the sturdy delinquent or workhouse group.

These two problems are the nuclei out of which has grown those public policies and obligations broadly designated as Public Health and Public Welfare. With the growth of the many diversified institutional facilities now available, and with the development of every public policy for relief supported from the public treasuries of American communities, the physically and mentally diseased, disordered, and defective person has arisen as a dominant complicating factor in administration, and sincere endeavors have been made to meet this special medico-social problem. Among such efforts there has gradually come the realization that physical and mental defects and physical and mental diseases are complicating factors in crime and in correctional procedure. It is this realization that led to setting up these special facilities at Springfield. They have for their object the safety and protection of civil communities; the application of rehabilitation measures in existing correctional institutions uncomplicated by the presence of these special medical problems; the humane care, cure, or amelioration of adverse

physical and mental states; and scientific studies for contributing to the sum of our knowledge concerning physical and mental disease and defect as motivating factors in crime, and the application of these results to future policies which a social order may adopt in meeting this special phase of the crime problem. These dedication ceremonies, therefore, represent a significant change in Federal approach to the crime situation. Looking beyond the scenes of the present hour, our prophetic fancy depicts an institution dedicated to the noble purpose of providing humane care and scientific interest for those who cannot, because of mental illness, meet the liberal standards of conduct maintained by our social organization.

It is fitting, in connection with these exercises, that I embrace this opportunity, on behalf of the Surgeon General and the United States Public Health Service, to express appreciation for the sympathetic understanding and interest which the people of Missouri, and the City of Springfield, especially the medical fraternity, have shown toward the purposes and objectives of this new enterprise. It is our every hope and wish that this same helpful cooperation will continue toward the activities and aims of this hospital.