Conference this year is my first as Commissioner of Food and Drugs. But since joining the Food and Drug Administration in 1966—two Conferences ago—I have had ample opportunity to recognize the value of this annual meeting and I hope we will be coming together for this same purpose next year, and for many years to come. This kind of dialogue is essential—essential for the Government, essential for industry, and, most important of all, essential for consumers. It is the consumer, after all, who has the most to lose if we fail to do our respective jobs well.

I suppose I could have begun this talk with the old cliche . . .

"Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking . . ." but I decided against it. It is true, however, that this is my first speaking appearance at a public forum since I became Commissioner last July 1. Many of you already know that it was not shyness that kept me away from the podium up to now. No, it was simply that I decided when I assumed the responsibilities of this office nearly six months ago that the personnel and the various organizations within FDA deserved first priority of my time.

As Director of FDA's Bureau of Medicine for nearly two years, I was familiar, of course, with the overall operation of the Agency. But, as most of you know, the activities of FDA are both broad in scope and complex in detail. I felt it was essential to become intimately acquainted with every phase of the Agency's operations before assuming the time and travel commitments necessary to meet with and speak to industry and professional associations—though I must quickly add that I also appreciate the importance of this kind of communication and I'm looking forward to the meetings on my schedule for the months ahead.

I don't want to give you the misleading impression that I have been completely isolated in my office over the past few months. There have been frequent meetings with industry representatives. For the most part, these have been congenial sessions, and I have welcomed these opportunities to discuss my views, and to listen to industry's views, on the many matters in which we must take a mutual interest. There have been other meetings in less cordial settings, but these, to, are necessary when it happens that private interests collide with the public interest.

Since assuming this office, I have also tried to give time to members of the press for I recognize and appreciate their obligation to report to the public on what those of us in Government are thinking and doing. This kind of contact is not without its perils, of course. I received a phone call some days ago from an irate Washington attorney who demanded to know why I was attacking the legal profession. It seems that I had been quoted as saying that FDA and industry could settle disputes much easier if lawyers were kept out of the picture. Let me assure the attorneys here today that even if I had such a view—and I do not—I would not be so rash as to announce it. What I did say, in answering a question about the need for legal representation, is that a businessman or any other citizen doesn't have to engage an attorney to take up a matter with FDA. That's a matter of individual choice, not a matter of FDA policy. We have gone to great pains on many occasions to point out that the Agency does not regulate the practice of medicine; I assure you we have no designs on the practice of law either.

No, our regulatory responsibilities are sufficiently demanding as it is; we are busy enough without venturing into alien fields. The program for this Conference gives some indication of the wide range of our consumer concerns—sanitation, self-regulation and self-certification, intensified drug inspections, fair packaging . . . and these are merely a sampling of FDA activities that are of particular interest at this point in time.

I do not plan to intrude this morning into the subject matter that will be explored in detail by the speakers and panelists who will come before you this afternoon and tomorrow. But I do want to share with you my own views on some of the specific problem areas with which FDA is now concerned. Some of these also have implications for the future—and I know you are interested in what lies ahead—for it seems to be in the nature of things that the problems with which FDA must grapple are not of the kind that lend themselves to quick, overnight solutions.

First, however, let me take a few moments, if I may, to describe the broader context of FDA's program, for this, too, offers some outline of the shape of things to come. Mr. Johnson has already introduced you to some of the goals of the Consumer Protection and Environmental Health Service, of which FDA is now a part. The challenge is an awesome one. For example, the topic of food addi-