

the call for a Congressional review of American drug regulatory policies was long overdue. "I have never questioned the FDA's good intentions or the honesty of its leadership. But the situation there is such that it cannot function properly."

Describing the FDA as a "stepchild in the superstructure" of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Dr. Modell said: "The FDA staff is simply insecure inside the HEW. Too many people can interfere with their operations. It would be far better if the FDA were to be re-established as a separate agency—like the Federal Trade Commission, for example. Further, in my view, the agency's function should be confined to drug regulation, with the role of food regulation sent back to the Department of Agriculture. Too much highly specialized knowledge is required in both food and drugs to be handled effectively by a single agency."

"NEVER DEVELOPED SECURITY"

Dr. Modell pointed to what he saw as another cause of the agency's problems: "FDA's scientists have never developed security or scientific stature," he asserted. "They lack a sense of authority or security in their judgments. As a result, they do not act with assurance in making decisions. They proceed by delaying actions."

The pharmacologist disclosed that some major American drug firms are planning to build new research facilities abroad, as one way of coping with the problems they encounter in the U.S. "Reversing a trend," he said, "there is now a danger that we will experience a scientific brain drain."

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FOR MODERATION . . .

Recently, many leading scientists as individuals and as members of ad hoc committees have begun to react to the whiplash effect of self-proclaimed crusaders on the public health and on health regulations. They protest the impingement by these new vested interests on the fundamental rights of researchers, practicing physicians, and patients. The most recent initiative on the part of scientists was a letter addressed to an outstanding legislative leader in the field of health, Representative Paul Rogers (D.-Fla.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Public Health and Environment. It rightly pointed out that regulatory processes were deleteriously affecting medical progress and the best interest of patients. It called, in effect, for a full-scale review of FDA drug regulations and the drug law upon which they are based.

For several decades now, health has made headlines. As the "wonder drugs" were discovered by the lay press, headline mileage was generated first by euphoric stories and, after these had run their course, by declamatory exposés. Both have attracted the attention of the public and of political figures. A responsible press and public leaders have made and continue to make positive contributions in regard to health, but there are too many irresponsible individuals who seek and garner headlines without regard to whether they help or harm those for whom health is a life and death issue. The time is long overdue for moderation in our perspective, in the reportage of health issues, and in our approach to legislation and regulation.

Medical Tribune, as far back as 1960, warned of the potentially stultifying effects of the new food and drug law and, since its passage, of the dangerous regulatory extensions, whose proliferation has raised so many obstacles to both research and treatment. At this time, Medical Tribune believes we confront the need for moderation.

. . . AND A MORATORIUM

The most meticulous study and exploration by the practicing physicians of the effects of these regulations on their patients' interests is long overdue. The inhibitory effects on medical research must be carefully scrutinized. Both procedures must be carried through with the calm and considered judgment that such important subjects demand. What is not needed at this time is a new spate of legislative hearings on drugs and drug regulations. What is needed is a constructive approach to free both the practicing physician and the researcher from some of the ridiculous and unconscionable restraints placed on their rights to fulfill their professional responsibilities with true freedom of conscience.