

The research manpower in each of these areas developed over the last 15 years brings us to a new staging point in each field. By correcting the administrative anomaly, the responsibility for priorities and appropriations of the still limited resources is placed more directly upon the shoulders of the Congress, where it rightfully should be, rather than upon the Director of National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness and his advisory council which generally has only one or two members representing ophthalmology.

On March 8, 1966, Congressman Herbert Tenzer shared with us, through the Congressional Record, a great many letters he had received relating to a proposed eye institute.

Among them was a letter from Dr. Michael J. Hogan, chairman of ophthalmology at the University of California. As one who has worked closely with NINDB, at one time serving on the Vision Research Training Committee, Dr. Hogan's words are significant. He said:

In spite of the efforts of the very capable people who have administered the NINDB, it has not been possible to maintain a proper balance in the administration of eye research and training.

The problems involved with blindness are so distinct from neurological diseases that the two have no real connection.

Similarly, Dr. Goodwin M. Breinin, New York University School of Medicine, wrote as follows:

For a good many years the problems of the eye have been submerged within the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness and very good work has most assuredly been carried out.

It is presently clear, however, that we have evolved so far beyond the abilities of a joint institute to adequately serve the problems of blindness.

Under the programs initiated by the NINDB great progress has been made in establishing first-rate departments of ophthalmology and affiliated research units around the country along with the development and training of personnel dedicated to research careers in vision.

The time has now come to divorce the field of vision from its subsidiary role within an institute whose primary responsibilities and concerns have related to matters other than the eye and vision.

To be sure, there are ties that bind ophthalmology and vision to the general field of neurological science and these ties must be maintained but the unique problems of the eye now require an administrative organization which can devote its efforts, undiluted, to the study and the implementation of programs of basic research and training centered on vision and blindness.

The disadvantages of isolation from the Institute of Neurology will be more than made up in the enhanced stress which will rightfully be placed upon visual problems.

Dr. Goodwin Breinin has also been a member of the Vision Research Training Committee and an ad hoc Subcommittee on Vision and Its Disorders under the Institute's advisory council.

Mr. Chairman, I believe we should heed these signals from research ophthalmologists and provide new levels of growth for both eye research and neurological research.

It is time to cut the apron strings. To fail to do so when the energies of both medical fields have been primed to a healthy production rate could mean discouragement and a downward turn for each.

It has taken too long for our country to reach this level; we cannot afford to lose an inch.

I believe that by dividing the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness into two institutes, not only will eye research be enhanced, but the same may be true of neurology.