

ing, and that which was medically impossible yesterday has become commonplace today.

On the other hand, we find ophthalmic investigators working under deplorable conditions which make it difficult, if not impossible, for them to move ahead effectively toward the conquest of blinding diseases. There is not enough laboratory space for eye research, there is not enough modern equipment, and there is not enough manpower to do what must be done.

We are not training enough researchers to meet the enormous needs in this field, and we are not providing sufficient incentive to keep those we train. Money alone will not provide the answer. Our essential need is for a concerted research attack against blinding diseases, planned, directed, and executed by those whose lives are dedicated to the study of the eye and its problems.

Until we put leadership and direction of eye research in the hands of those who best understand ophthalmic problems, we will witness the continuous, steady rise in the incidence of blindness in this Nation and throughout the world. The cost of this neglect is more than \$1 billion each year in this country alone in terms of care, treatment, and services for our rapidly-increasing blind population.

The Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service, Dr. William H. Stewart, made some very astute observations on health needs in a speech a few months ago. He said that great segments of our population are totally separated from vital health services and that changes will not come about until the public demands them.

I quote Dr. Stewart's words: "We need a renewal of public indignation and initiative." Public health officials, he said, "need to be held to the fire to hammer out (their) words into sharp, pointed action."

I appear before this committee today as an intensely interested layman to register a "public demand," as the Surgeon General has put it. I am here to express indignation that millions of our people are compelled to face the threat of visual loss without the benefit of sharp, pointed action.

And I am ready to demonstrate public initiative in pleading with our Representatives to act positively upon our urgent request that the Congress create a National Eye Institute separate and complete within the National Institutes of Health.

Since we established Research to Prevent Blindness, Inc., in 1960, it has been necessary for us to amass all sorts of information relating to vision. We have explored the dimensions of the problem in terms of people—how many suffer from eye problems, what are the major causes of their disability and whether the best interests of people are being served in our traditional approach to loss of sight. We have inquired into public attitudes toward blindness. We have informed ourselves as to what is being done by the multitude of organizations and agencies created by the American people to meet the vast and complex needs of the blind and the near-blind.

Most important in the planning and development of our programs, we have had to find out just what the status of eye research is in the United States—what potential exists for a concerted research attack, what are the strengths and weaknesses of American ophthalmology, what are the scientific needs and opportunities in terms of laboratory space equipment, trained manpower, and financial support.