

Mr. STEIN. I think this can be left in their hands, but it should be in the structure of a separate institute. Ophthalmology has been at the bottom of the totem pole of our universities and of the National Institutes of Health.

I would like to ask Dr. Maumenee to reply to that or perhaps one of the other distinguished ophthalmologists here today.

Mr. KYROS. Why should it remain as a function of the Federal Government? Why can't you have a private group and possibly apply for grants from the Federal Government to do your research work, getting the same amount of money but not having the Federal Government in charge of the program?

After all, one of the daily complaints we hear whether it is in cities, in air, water, automobiles, safety, is that the Federal Government is undertaking too many obligations that local governments and the public should meet by themselves.

Frankly, with all your expertise which I admire so much, I am somewhat surprised that you all come here and say wholeheartedly that you want to have an Eye Institute headed up by the Surgeon General which might engender the same types of administrative problems you are complaining about.

Mr. STEIN. Would you be asking us to argue against the whole National Institutes of Health?

Mr. KYROS. No; I am not.

First, we would have an Eye Institute and something for kidneys and legs and toes and we could simply go on forever. I am just asking you to tell me because I just want to be convinced.

My mind is open on this. I am merely inquiring why it should be another Federal program.

Mr. STEIN. There are more eye cases than any other disease of the human body. It should be top priority, not bottom.

Mr. KYROS. My point is: Why should it not be administered by some group such as you are in, the National Research to Prevent Blindness?

Why not some group like that to administer it rather than the Federal Government?

Dr. MAUMENEE. Congressman Kyros, you have posed a very interesting question and you are certainly much more knowledgeable about the structure of government than I am, but I don't know under what structure we could have a contract of this magnitude on health, administered by private industry and funded by the Federal Government.

This may be a method to be considered in the future for handling such problems. I think it would be asking even more of you gentlemen to establish such a totally different structure than we are asking for within the National Institutes of Health.

Our primary plea to you is that although the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness has done a good job considering everything, we know that with an ophthalmologist heading a separate Eye Institute we can take these same dollars and put them to more effective use for research in the prevention of blindness than has been done in the NINDB.

Mr. KYROS. No one quarrels with that and I respect your point.

If the Government through its efforts has not been successful because of administrative problems and other problems pointed out