

STATEMENT OF CLINTON M. FAIR, LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Chairman, H.R. 15758, the Public Health Service Act Amendments which this committee is now considering, is a package of important extensions and improvements to existing legislation as well as extension of the Community Mental Health Centers Act to provide facilities for alcoholics and drug addicts.

Through the extension and improvement of the Regional Medical Programs, this legislation strikes at the cause of death for seven out of ten Americans. In extending the Migrant Health Program, this legislation helps bring better health to some of the nation's one million migrant farm workers and their families and brings us closer to the day when we will have corrected what has been called "America's Shame." The Alcoholic Rehabilitation Amendments in this legislation will help provide proper treatment for the five million persons—more than twice the population of the entire Washington, D.C. area—who with their families suffer the physical and emotional problems which result from alcohol addiction. The Narcotic Addict Rehabilitation Amendments in H.R. 15758 will aid in carrying on and expanding what must be an aggressive effort to stem the rising number of drug addicts, especially among the nation's young people.

REGIONAL MEDICAL PROGRAM

The President's Commission on Heart Disease, Cancer, and Stroke, described three years ago the severe toll in human suffering which these diseases inflict on the American public, each diminishes the strength of our nation. The American worker looks forward to the day when major inroads will be made against these diseases through medical research and when the fruits of such research can be made available to him at a price he can afford.

The nation's poor, whose ill health is virtually inseparable from their way of life, look forward to the day when they can share fully in the fruits of modern medical science.

Since the Report of the Committee on the Costs of Medical Care was published in 1932, the regularization of health services has been considered necessary in order to bring about a more rational allocation of our health resources, but until the passage of P.L. 89-239, very little had been accomplished to implement such goals. The Regional Medical Program has, however, within the short time it has been in operation, made remarkable strides in developing cooperative arrangements with the medical profession, our medical colleges and other health institutions. This program holds great promise of making available to patients the latest advances in the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease, cancer, stroke and related diseases. This coordination of effort also holds great promise, not only of providing the best of care for those afflicted, but also of avoiding the needless costs of a duplication and wasteful proliferation of diagnostic and treatment centers in our hospitals.

We realize, of course, that evaluation of the program is difficult at this time. The program is too new and the great bulk of expenditures, to date, have been for planning activities. A total of 53 grants have been made for such planning, and it will be some time before plans can be implemented. However, the Surgeon General's Report on Regional Medical Programs to The President And The Congress, submitted by Dr. Stewart last June, indicated some of the program's early accomplishments.

A few special examples of programs already in operation deserve mention here. In the notorious Watts section in California, too large a proportion of the population has been virtually cut off from the mainstream of modern medicine. Under the Regional Medical Program proposed there, the medical schools of the University of Southern California and the University of California at Los Angeles and the Charles R. Drew Medical Association are cooperating to devise a plan for bringing some order into the health service vacuum now existing there. A 485-bed hospital and a proposed Postgraduate Medical School are later phases of the program's bold plan.

The Albany Regional Medical Program has developed a comprehensive program of education, organization, record-keeping, and follow-up examinations in an attack on cancer of the cervix. This disease, which now kills some 14,000 women each year, could be eliminated as a major cause of death if the disease is diagnosed and acted upon at an early stage. During the first year, the cancer control program is being inaugurated in seven hospitals in New York and Massachusetts.