

NEW DEAL PUSHES MEDICAL CARE PLAN

Altmeyer Appeals to Public Health Association as Abell Speaks for Medical Men

By **HUGH O'CONNOR**

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KANSAS CITY, Mo., Oct. 26.—Spokesmen of the Federal Government presented an official appeal today to the general meeting of the American Public Health Association to support a newly proposed extension of social security principles which would provide medical care for the public.

The swift development of the issue since the National Public Health Conference was called by President Roosevelt in Washington last July was marked by the appearance here of Arthur J. Altmeyer, chairman of the Social Security Board, who came from Washington to present the situation himself.

Mr. Altmeyer waved aside as "secondary" the controversial issues of politics in the administration of such a vast project, and the intervention of government in the practice of medicine, raised at a special session in Chicago last month by the American Medical Association in the name of 100,000 private practitioners.

His audience represented a membership of 6,100 health experts serving on public welfare and industrial payrolls, more than half of them doctors, but engaged in group medicine rather than individualized practice. Their representative, speaking later, disagreed with the American Medical Association and declared the present willingness of the American Public Health Association to assume the leadership to which Mr. Altmeyer nominated them.

Calls for a Single System

Mr. Altmeyer said it would be unsound to separate medical care for public dependents from medical care for the otherwise self-supporting who cannot support a doctor in an emergency. Consequently, he said, there should be one system, administered by the local or State public health officers, with Federal advice and grants of funds.

Starting immediately on a "ten-year plan," he asserted, the total public cost would rise to about \$850,000,000 a year, of which the locality would match the half contributed by the nation.

"The public nowadays wishes to avoid illness and disability that formerly were assumed to be the lot of mankind," Mr. Altmeyer said. "They have learned through the efforts of the health agencies and from the press, the radio and other media of communication that a large part of the illness which they still suffer is avoidable.

"The public knows that the professions possess the knowledge and skills requisite to make this a much more healthful nation than it is at present. With this public understanding of the possibilities inherent in health service has come a popular demand that there be made available to every one, regardless of economic status, the services and facilities which now all too frequently are luxuries beyond the reach of those who have small means.

"It is because of this awakening

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named as spokesman for the convention, after the addresses by Mr. Altmeyer and Dr. Abell.

The urgent need for the program which the government recommended at the National Health Conference could no longer be questioned, Professor Winslow said.

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"The physician exists for the patient; not the patient for the physician," he added.

The safeguarding of professional standards, concerning which the American Medical Association had expressed anxiety under the new Federal recommendations, was property of the organized private business of the practitioners," but, Professor Winslow said, "the method by which the customer elects to pool his financial resources to pay for medical services is his own business."

He approved of the principle that all funds under the proposed Federal health plan are to be spent, as under the Social Security Act, by State and local government authorities. In a health program, he said, these local government authorities should unquestionably be the public health officials.

Some plan of helping the "bulk of the population" which cannot budget for "the random catastrophe of serious medical emergency" was looked upon by the association's spokesman as "simple, logical and inevitable."

As to the thorny difficulties of health insurance," Professor Winslow said, "the American Medical Association is on one side and the most politically powerful consumer groups of the nation are on the other side—the A. F. of L., the C. I. O., the American Farm Bureau Federation, the Federation of Women's Clubs, the National Parent Teachers Association and others.

"You will notice that the choice between tax-supported medical service and insurance is left to the States. The conflict will come in the States, and in this conflict I seriously question whether the American Medical Association has chosen its position wisely.

The fear of federalization is a bugaboo. I regard the Federal Government as an organ through which and my fellow-citizens can function as through State and local government, or through a local community chest. There is no moral or spiritual distinction between a voluntary or an official medical agency. "I think the evidence presented has been absolutely overwhelming that individual and voluntary and State agencies are inadequate to meet this situation without the stimulus that a Federal plan will provide."

Dr. Martha M. Eliot, chairman of President Roosevelt's technical committee on medical care and assistant chief of the Children's Bureau in Washington, said that "whether the public will turn to one agency or another will depend upon the way the agencies equip themselves to provide the best service in this field."

The executive board of the Public Health Association is expected to adopt resolutions tomorrow, expressed its official attitude toward the government's recommendations, committee to coordinate health and welfare activities, and the Technical Committee on Medical Care named by President Roosevelt. He expressed hope that the differences would be reconciled.

The appointment of a similar committee to meet with President Roosevelt's medical experts in Washington on Monday was promised yesterday by Abel Wolman, incoming president of the Public Health Association.

C.-E. A. Winslow, Professor of Public Health at the Yale Medical School and a past president of the Public Health Association, was