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Another Crusade!

It has been less than a year since the Cancer Crusade legislation was passed. About \$1.6 billion was appropriated for 3 years and a critical change in research policy was initiated. The search for causes and cures of cancer is henceforth to be highly systematized, with specific, approved battle plans and a ruling hierarchy of both scientists and laymen. Little significant opposition to this far-reaching legislation has been voiced publicly. Too much money and power are at stake for overt criticism. The plan has not received such kindly treatment in private conversation, however. A new way of life has been dictated to research workers, despite such phenomenally good results from the old way that the American Cancer Society could state that the cure for cancer was just around the corner. They may be right—who knows? But this is soothing, not science.

Predictably, heart disease, our deadliest disease, is next in line. It is already assumed that the cancer plan is a success, opening a whole new era in the method of discovery. In such a heady atmosphere, again almost without public discussion, the Kennedy-Rogers bills authorizing \$1.3 billion over 3 years will probably pass quickly. "The thrust of the \$1.3 billion heart-stroke-lung package drew praise from all witnesses. . . ." How familiar—and how quickly we researchers change our spots! An advisory study panel on heart disease has already been appointed, fortunately under very able John Millis, but the bill seems destined to pass even before the panel has a chance to advise.

All scientists should be aware that this is a gut reorganization of basic biomedical science which deeply involves us all. High levels of organization, hopefully clear lines of authority, enforced by money, are all critical. There are probably many who relish the plan, but the doubters are silent. "Organized medicine," in its broadest connotation, has taken no stand. (It should be noted that the British Select Committee on Science and Technology has recently decided against a science policy for that nation, despite the Rothschild report.) Organized administrators, lobbyists, and those with strong bases of political power have proved their capacity to do a superb job. Probably next on the list of crusades will be nervous and mental diseases.

The resultant activities of the tax collector may emasculate the fund-raising efforts of voluntary health agencies. Those closest to government, the Washington scientific community, emanate frustration, hopelessness, and helplessness. Acceptance of whatever the legislative juggernaut demands seems inevitable. Much of the freedom of science is now being legislated away, and we are approaching the Russian system of directed research—protestations to the contrary. Possibly we need more disciplined research, but do we need the government to administer and define the discipline? Dr. Robert Marston, the director of the National Institutes of Health, has assured me that my fears are exaggerated.

I have often expressed doubt about instituting such vital changes in research without any idea as to their outcome. True, we are going somewhere much faster, but we are not sure where we are going. I appreciate the enormous power of the politics that maneuvered these changes so quickly and painlessly. I hold no brief against politics, except when it fails to expose contrary opinion. We are making decisions that affect life and death in a way that I feel is cavalier. The policy gyrations of the Regional Medical Program should alert us to the rapidity with which political winds change. The uncertainty principle is fully applicable. —IRVINE H. PAGE, *Editor*, *Modern Medicine*, 8907 Carnegie Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44106