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## The 84th Congress: Health and Medicine

Now that Congress has adjourned, and many of the bills passed have been signed by the President to become public laws, it is desirable to see what was done. Although not all of the President's proposals in the field of health and medical research were enacted into law, a substantial program was put through. Here are some of the highlights.

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has the responsibility for a large part of the health activities of the Government. It received the impressive appropriation of \$2366 million, of which \$441 million is to be allocated to the Public Health Service. The appropriation for the National Institutes of Health, a division of the PHS, had an interesting history. The budget request was for \$126 million; the House raised this to \$135 million and the Senate added another \$49 million to bring the total to \$184 million. There was some debate about the ability of the NIH to use funds so greatly in excess of the budget request, but, as was reported by Senator Hill, "eminent doctors and scientists" gave assurances that the money could be "prudently and wisely spent." There would be a greater question about this if NIH had to absorb the increase itself, but almost all of the additional funds will be used for grants in support of research in medical schools, universities, and other research institutions. The past record of NIH in disbursing grants gives us confidence that the money will indeed be "prudently and wisely spent" without any lowering of the standards to be met in qualifying for grants.

The Armed Forces Medical Library will become a National Library of Medicine, an overdue change to which we earlier gave editorial support [*Science* 123, 869 (18 May 1956)]. The law as finally enacted transfers the library from the Department of Defense to the Public Health Service under the control of a board of regents. The Surgeon General of PHS is authorized, "in accordance with the direction of the Board . . ." to select a site and to erect and equip buildings for the library. There is now no doubt that the National Library of Medicine will soon become a reality.

Another major accomplishment was the enactment of a law to establish a National Advisory Council on Health Research Facilities. The council will be headed by the Surgeon General of PHS and will include a representative of the National Science Foundation and 12 members appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The law that established the council also authorized the expenditure of \$30 million annually for 3 years (1957-59) on a 50-50 matching basis for construction of health research facilities by public or nonprofit institutions. A move by Representative Mack to amend the bill to provide medical training was ruled out of order. Mack said that training was "more important today than research because you cannot do research unless you train young men and women. . . ." In signing the bill, the President called the law "an important step forward" but criticized the bill for not providing for the construction of facilities for training medical scientists.

We agree with the criticisms of Representative Mack and the President, which point to what is a characteristic weakness in our support of education as well as research, both public and private, in the United States. We are inclined to put money more readily into facilities than into the development and support of people to man them.—G. DuS.