

Highway Construction

A major highway has been proposed to run across New England and is currently in the early planning stages.

Three corridors are being considered, and the choice will be made this summer. I represent a citizens' group from one of the three areas. I am trying to marshal all pertinent information about the ecologically destructive effects of such construction, for public hearings to be held this summer.

The Federal Highway Act of 1970 contains a provision to build roads not because of defense or transportation needs but in order to stimulate economic development. It also contains some rather vague controls to help affected citizens make their views known. In an effort to use this part of the law one hits an immediate roadblock—citizens outside the ecological scientific community do not have specific information to present at public hearings so that damages can be avoided. We would like to invite any whose knowledge would be helpful to contact us, or direct us to those who could help us.

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State Research Budget

The meat ax approach to budget cutting by the New York state legislature, which has produced the current impasse in New York city and state financing, threatens to cause great harm to the future as well as the current welfare of our citizenry. A striking example is the reduction of the budget of the Department of Mental Hygiene, especially the portion for research, which has been reduced by \$2.3 million. In a total departmental budget of \$596 million, this is an apparent saving of less than 0.5 percent, but it drains the very lifeblood of the research undertaking. In practical terms it means the elimination of six entire research units and cutbacks in personnel and funding in all the others.

What has research in mental disorders accomplished in the past? A partial listing would include the conquest of general paresis and pellagra with psychoses in the early decade of the century; development of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, and deflation of the focal infection theory of mental disorders in the '20's; develop-

ment of somatic therapies (electroconvulsive therapy and insulin) in the '30's; development of milieu therapies in the mental hospital, and deflation of the claims of psychosurgery in the '40's; development of drug treatments in the '50's; development of the genetics of mental disorders in the '40's and '50's; development of community mental health programs in the '60's; and intervention in high-risk populations in the '70's for preventive purposes.

Several attempts have been made to assess the financial burden which the state would have had to bear had these scientific developments not occurred. The resident patient population of the state has been reduced from 92,862 in 1956 to 57,625 in 1971, a reduction of some 30 percent. It has been estimated that at current per patient costs this has reduced expenditures by hundreds of millions of dollars.

Not very long ago the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene expressed pride in the fact that mental patients are spending less and less time in the hospital. This is due primarily to the increasingly skillful use of drugs, drugs which were developed by research and evaluated by research for effectiveness. The money saved in patient costs far exceeds the \$2.3 million saved by eliminating six research departments.

Few laymen realize that one type of mental retardation has been successfully treated and eliminated as a result of biochemical research. Thousands of people who would have been cared for all their lives in schools for the mentally retarded, at tremendous cost to the taxpayers, are now living normal productive lives in the community. And the saving in money is nothing compared to the saving of anguish to many families. How many other such discoveries are being prevented by the shortsighted policy of eliminating whole research laboratories? . . .

It is also important to recognize that research helps us to determine what does not work. There are expensive clinical treatment programs in current use that probably accomplish little or nothing for patients. Research can help us find this out, and ridding ourselves of such useless treatment programs would undoubtedly save considerably more than the cost of the research units conducting such investigations.

The state's research policy has developed one of the finest traditions in its dealings with its research staff. Although for many years the salaries of research men were well below univer-

sity salaries and considerably below industrial salaries, the devotion of these men kept them at their posts despite all temptations to leave. State research positions commanded the greatest respect and trust and attracted such outstanding men as the late Franz Kallmann, father of genetic investigation into mental disorders in the United States; Heinrich Waelsh, founder of the new science of neurochemistry; and the former commissioner of mental hygiene, Paul Hoch, who brought about the unlocking of the mental hospitals in New York State. If the current cuts in the budget result in the elimination of six or seven research units and the abolishing of some 200 research positions, the prestige of the state will suffer an irreparable blow. A laboratory which is dismantled is not easily reestablished. Projects which may have been in progress for months or years are dropped. It becomes very difficult to recruit new men. . . .

If future improvements in patient care are to develop, if the causes of mental disorders are to be discovered, if prevention measures are to be found, then the state must rescind these cruel cuts into the very heart of the research effort.

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Abolishing Poverty

In Marx's letter (19 Mar., p. 1096) there appears a thought which leaves me puzzled. It is included in the sentence, "In America we have had the technological power to abolish poverty for years, but we have not yet developed the will to do it." This idea has been expressed elsewhere by others, but in no case has the technological process that would abolish poverty been described. If these critics have knowledge of how to solve this problem they should make it available for implementation.

What are the feasible technological methods that would lead to an abolishment of poverty? Wealth can be redistributed, but that is not a technological solution. Full employment might involve technology, but would not be a technological solution. What are the solutions?

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