totals and as distributed across varying population densities; of treatment patterns and facility utilization; of costs of health care, per unit, in the aggregate, and as percentages of national income; and of morbidity and mortality rates—only lead the author to very general conclusions. Example: "The conclusion is suggested that the dominant reason why the Swedish mortality rates are lower than in any state in the United States is a high minimum standard of living for everyone and a cultural homogeneity of life styles of sanitation and cleanliness."

Such a conclusion, broad though it is, is not without implications for social policy. Anderson, like Schwartz, suggests that "the elimination of poverty in the United States in the sense true for Sweden would be more likely to bring mortality rates closer to Sweden than a policy limited to health services only." I do not know anyone who would argue that point. But it seems to me that, after ginning up a wealth of information which would permit a tentative answer, the author begs the question he poses in his title. Or at least he does not gather the evidence scattered throughout the book into a pertinent conclusion.

Anderson finds, not surprisingly, that none of the three systems is perfectly equitable; nor, he stresses, can any medical care system provide "equality of access in its pure form." Thus the search for a better system goes forward in Sweden and England as well as in the United States. Meanwhile: (i) The lower fetal and infant mortality rates in Sweden and England are undoubtedly related to the "more coordinated, easily accessible care" available in those countries (pp. 149-150). (ii) The difference in mortality rates, which are higher in the United States at every age level (and affected shamefully by higher rates among blacks than among whites), is "probably too great to be explained by social conditions and undoubtedly reflects an actual difference in available care" (p. 151). (iii) "Income-class differences were generally found in the United States but not in Sweden for physician services and drugs" (p. 159). And (iv) the U.S. system provides far less protection of "family financial solvency" in the event of medical need than do the other two countries (p.

Thus whether there can ever be perfect equity, or perfect efficacy, Anderson seems to have found that two other health care systems have certain advantages over ours. They also have their debits, as Anderson also shows, and the United States has strengths that few people would want to give up. In the end, we must devise our own improvements. May the movement continue with all due speed.

STEPHEN P. STRICKLAND Health Policy Program, University of California, San Francisco

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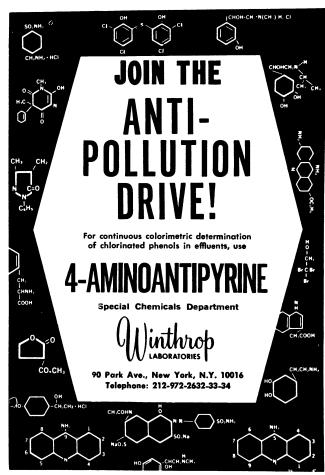
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