

TESTIMONY OF  
SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY  
IN BEHALF OF CONQUEST OF CANCER ACT  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE  
MARCH 10, 1971

MORE THAN FOUR DECADES AGO, THE LATE SENATOR MATT NEELY OF WEST VIRGINIA, WHO DIED IN 1958 OF THE VERY DISEASE HE HAD BEEN FIGHTING LEGISLATIVELY FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, VIVIDLY DESCRIBED CANCER IN A SPEECH ON THE FLOOR OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE:

"I PROPOSE TO SPEAK OF A MONSTER THAT IS MORE INSATIATE THAN THE GUILLOTINE; MORE IRRESISTIBLE THAN THE MIGHTIEST ARMY THAT EVER MARCHED TO BATTLE; MORE TERRIFYING THAN ANY OTHER SCOURGE THAT HAS EVER THREATENED THE EXISTENCE OF THE HUMAN RACE. THE NAME OF THIS LOATHSOME, DEADLY AND INSATIATE MONSTER IS CANCER. IT IS OLDER THAN THE HUMAN RACE. EVIDENCE OF CANCER HAS BEEN FOUND IN THE FOSSIL REMAINS OF A SERPENT THAT IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE LIVED MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO. RECORDS MADE ON <sup>Papyrus</sup> PAPYRI BY THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS SHOW THAT THE CANCER CURSE WAS KNOWN IN THE VALLEY OF THE NILE MORE THAN 2000 YEARS BEFORE THE BIRTH OF CHRIST."

THAT WAS 1928, AND SENATOR NEELY NOTED THAT CANCER WAS THEN TAKING 125,000 LIVES A YEAR. HE WARNED THAT THE ANNUAL TOLL WOULD RISE SIGNIFICANTLY UNLESS A MAJOR MEDICAL RESEARCH OFFENSIVE WAS MOUNTED AGAINST IT. TODAY, WITH THE DEATH RATE FROM CANCER AT 325,000 A YEAR, THE WISDOM OF SENATOR NEELY'S WARNING IS CLEAR.

HE CALLED FOR A \$100,000 (ONE-HUNDRED-THOUSAND-DOLLAR) INITIATIVE AGAINST CANCER THAT YEAR, BUT CONGRESS WAS NOT FULLY CONVINCED OF THE THREAT AND FINALLY VOTED ONLY \$50,000.

MORE

HUMPHREY - 2

HOW DIFFERENT THINGS MIGHT BE IF THE CONGRESS HAD LISTENED TO MATT NEELY IN 1928 . . . OR IN 1937, WHEN HE SUCCEEDED IN GETTING CONGRESS TO ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE BUT FAILED TO WIN FOR IT THE MONEY HE FELT IT NEEDED TO DO THE JOB.

IN 1946, NEELY, THEN A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, INTRODUCED A BILL TO APPROPRIATE \$100 MILLION TO LAUNCH A LARGE SCALE OFFENSIVE AGAINST CANCER.

THAT WAS 25 YEARS AGO -- 25 YEARS BEFORE PRESIDENT NIXON CALLED FOR A \$100 MILLION CANCER INITIATIVE. HOW MUCH LONGER MUST WE WAIT?

SENATOR NEELY NOTED THAT DURING WORLD WAR II CANCER KILLED TWICE AS MANY PERSONS AS DID ENEMY BULLETS.

TO BRING THAT UP TO DATE, LET ME POINT OUT THAT MORE AMERICANS DIED OF CANCER LAST YEAR ALONE THAN WERE KILLED IN ACTION THROUGHOUT THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

AND IN THE PAST SIX YEARS OF FIGHTING IN VIETNAM, 44,000 AMERICANS HAVE BEEN KILLED. AT THE SAME TIME, BACK HOME, CANCER KILLED TWO MILLION PERSONS -- THAT'S MORE THAN 45 TIMES AS MANY HUMAN BEINGS DESTROYED BY CANCER AS BY THE WAR.

AND OF THOSE 2 MILLION, 35,000 WERE CHILDREN. THAT'S ABOUT 312 YOUNGSTERS A WEEK.

I DON'T WISH TO DWELL IN THE PAST AND ON THE LOST BATTLES OF MATT NEELY, FOR "OF ALL THE WORDS OF TONGUE OR PEN, THE SADDEST OF ALL ARE THESE: IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN".

BUT WE SHOULD NOT IGNORE HIS PROPHECY, FOR THOSE WHO FORGET THE LESSONS OF HISTORY ARE DOOMED TO REPEAT THEM.

OF THE 200 MILLION AMERICANS ALIVE TODAY, 50 MILLION WILL DEVELOP CANCER AND 35 MILLION WILL DIE OF THE DISEASE UNLESS BETTER METHODS OF PREVENTION AND TREATMENT ARE FOUND.

ABOUT HALF THOSE DEATHS WILL OCCUR BEFORE THE AGE OF 65. CANCER TODAY CAUSES MORE DEATHS AMONG CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 15 THAN ANY OTHER DISEASE.

HUMPHREY - 3

THE CONQUEST OF CANCER ACT IS ESTIMATED TO REQUIRE AN INITIAL FUNDING LEVEL OF \$200 MILLION RISING TO \$800 MILLION OR EVEN \$1 BILLION BY 1976.

THESE ARE SMALL SUMS WHEN PLACED AGAINST OUR NATIONAL RESOURCES OR THE HUMAN SUFFERING AND ECONOMIC LOSS ATTRIBUTABLE TO CANCER.

PAIN AND SORROW CANNOT BE MEASURED IN TERMS OF DOLLARS, BUT THE ECONOMIC COSTS OF CANCER CAN BE, AND THEY ARE CONSERVATIVELY ESTIMATED AT \$15 BILLION A YEAR.

MAJOR ADVANCES IN THE FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF CANCER HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE PAST DECADE AND THEY HAVE OPENED UP FAR MORE PROMISING AREAS FOR INTENSIVE INVESTIGATION THAN HAVE HERETOFORE EXISTED.

THESE AREAS OF SPECIAL PROMISE MUST BE EXPLORED WITH VIGOR IF WE ARE TO EXPLOIT THE GREAT OPPORTUNITIES THAT LIE BEFORE US.

JUST 30 YEARS AGO, ONLY ONE IN FIVE CANCER PATIENTS SURVIVED. TODAY ONE PATIENT IN THREE IS CURED AND THAT NUMBER SHOULD BE ONE IN TWO.

I HAVE SAID MANY TIMES THAT I BELIEVE WE HAVE THE BEST DOCTORS, SCIENTISTS AND MEDICAL RESEARCHERS IN THE WORLD, THE FINEST MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY ANYWHERE.

IF THAT IS SO -- AND IT IS -- HOW CAN THE DISTINGUISHED PANEL OF CONSULTANTS ON THE CONQUEST OF CANCER SAY THAT THE CURE RATE OF THIS DISEASE CAN BE REDUCED FROM ONE-IN-THREE TO ONE-IN-TWO "BY A BETTER APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE WHICH EXISTS TODAY?"

THE ANSWER LIES NOT IN THE DOCTORS AND SCIENTISTS AND RESEARCHERS, NOT IN THE TECHNOLOGY OR THE SCIENCE -- BUT IN THE SYSTEM THROUGH WHICH THIS IS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE PEOPLE.

THE UGLY TRUTH IS THAT NOT ONLY ARE WE SUFFERING FROM A SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL MANPOWER AND FACILITIES, BUT THAT WHICH WE DO HAVE IS POORLY DISTRIBUTED GEOGRAPHICALLY. THE POOR IN THE GHETTOS OF OUR CITIES AND THOSE PERSONS WHO LIVE IN OUR MORE REMOTE RURAL AREAS SIMPLY ARE UNABLE TO GET THE MEDICAL CARE THEY NEED AND DESERVE. THAT PROBLEM, MR. CHAIRMAN, WAS WELL ILLUSTRATED BY THE JUST CONCLUDED HEARINGS BEFORE THIS BODY.

MORE

HUMPHREY - 4

IF ALL OUR CITIZENS COULD RECEIVE THE SAME QUALITY OF DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT NOW AVAILABLE AT THE BEST TREATMENT CENTERS, WE COULD SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE THE DEATH RATE FROM CANCER. THIS CALLS FOR NO GREAT SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH -- THOUGH ULTIMATELY THAT IS WHAT IS NEEDED -- THIS SIMPLY CALLS FOR A MORE EQUITABLE, JUST DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESOURCES ALREADY AVAILABLE TO THE MORE PRIVILEGED MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY.

CANCER IS THE NUMBER TWO KILLER IN THE UNITED STATES, AFTER HEART DISEASE. THE SAME IS TRUE IN MOST OF EUROPE AND IN THE SOVIET UNION.

CANCER KILLS MORE THAN TWO MILLION PEOPLE A YEAR IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD AND THE RATE IS INCREASING ALL THE TIME. AS MAN CONQUERS MORE AND MORE OF THE BIOLOGICAL DISEASES AND LENGTHENS THE LIFE EXPECTANCY OF PEOPLE IN EMERGING AND DEVELOPING NATIONS, WE WILL SEE A DRAMATIC INCREASE IN THE INCIDENCE OF CANCER.

AS POORER NATIONS ELIMINATE THE DISEASES ALREADY GONE FROM THE RICHER ONES -- LIKE CHOLERA, SMALLPOX, DIPHTHERIA, YELLOW FEVER AND TYPHOID -- BOTH ARE LEFT WITH THE ONES FOR WHICH THERE IS NO CURE, LIKE HEART DISEASE AND CANCER.

A DOZEN YEARS AGO, I WAS CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON REORGANIZATION AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. AFTER EXTENSIVE STUDY AND RESEARCH, INCLUDING TRAVEL AND VISITS TO MEDICAL CENTERS IN WESTERN EUROPE, POLAND AND THE SOVIET UNION, WE PUBLISHED A DOCUMENT ENTITLED "CANCER: A WORLD-WIDE MENACE."

IN THAT REPORT, I NOTED THAT CANCER "IS A DISEASE WHOSE ULTIMATE CONQUEST WILL UNDOUBTEDLY INVOLVE AN UNPARALLELED EFFORT OF WORLDWIDE BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH."

MORE

HUMPHREY - 5

THE CONQUEST OF CANCER IS AN INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE. THE CONQUEST OF CANCER ACT RECOGNIZES THIS BY PROVIDING FOR A DEGREE OF SUPPORT FOR FOREIGN RESEARCH AND SCIENTISTS, BUT IT BASICALLY IS A NATIONAL PLAN.

I SUGGEST CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO MAKING THIS AN INTERNATIONAL CRUSADE.

DURING MY 1969 VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION, I FOUND GREAT ENTHUSIASM FOR A WIDER EXCHANGE OF MEDICAL INFORMATION AND DIAGNOSTIC DATA, FOR CLOSER COOPERATION IN MEDICAL RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY.

IT IS MY OPINION THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO POOLING INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES TO FIGHT CANCER.

I SAID IT THEN IN MY 1959 REPORT, AND I REPEAT IT TODAY, "THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR THAT CANCER IS A WORLD PROBLEM, BEST SOLVED BY RESEARCH ON A WORLD BASIS. THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF SCIENTISTS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD SHOULD BE APPLIED TO DEVELOPING AND EXPLOITING LEADS WHEREVER THEY OCCUR . . ."

AGAINST A UNIVERSAL KILLER, MANKIND MUST OFFER A UNIVERSAL DEFENDER -- SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION. AGAINST AN ENEMY WHICH STRIKES IRRESPECTIVE OF POLITICS OR IDEOLOGY, MANKIND MUST STRENGTHEN TEAMWORK IN A MANNER WHICH TRANSCENDS THESE OR OTHER FACTORS.

"AT STAKE IS TRIUMPH IN A HUMAN ADVENTURE OF HIGHEST DRAMA. AND WITH TRIUMPH, WILL COME THE PRIZE OF A LESSENING OF HUMAN SUFFERING AND OF PREMATURE DEATH THROUGHOUT THE WORLD."

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HUMPHREY - 6

IN MY NEARLY THREE DECADES OF PUBLIC SERVICE, INCLUDING MORE THAN 16 YEARS IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE, I HAVE DEVOTED A GOOD PART OF MY TIME AND ENERGY TO WORKING FOR IMPROVED HEALTH CARE FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

IN RETURNING TO THE SENATE, I BRING WITH ME AN EVEN STRONGER COMMITMENT TO MAKE IMPROVED HEALTH SERVICES FOR ALL 206 MILLION AMERICANS A MATTER OF TOP PRIORITY.

I WANT TO SEE THIS 92ND CONGRESS GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS THE HEALTH CONGRESS.

LET US RESOLVE THAT BY 1976, WHEN OUR GREAT NATION CELEBRATES ITS 200TH BIRTHDAY, THE UNITED STATES WILL BE KNOWN AS THE HEALTHIEST NATION IN THE WORLD.

ONE WAY WE CAN HELP ACHIEVE THAT GOAL IS THROUGH ENACTMENT OF THE CONQUEST OF CANCER ACT.

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