A National Health Program: Message From the President*

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

In my message to the Congress of September 6, 1945, there were enumerated in a proposed economic bill of rights certain rights which ought to be assured to every American citizen.

One of them was "the right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health." Another was the "right to adequate protection from the economic fears of . . . sickness . . ."

Millions of our citizens do not now have a full measure of opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health. Millions do not now have protection or security against the economic effects of sickness. The time has arrived for action to help them attain that opportunity and that protection.

The people of the United States received a shock when the medical examinations conducted by the Selective Service System revealed the widespread physical and mental incapacity among the young people of our Nation. We had had prior warnings from eminent medical authorities and from investigating committees. The statistics of the last war had shown the same condition. But the Selective Service System has brought it forcibly to our attention recently in terms which all of us can understand.

As of April 1, 1945, nearly 5 million male registrants between the ages of 18 and 37 had been examined and classified as unfit for military service. The number of those rejected for military service was about 30 percent of all those examined. The percentage of rejection was lower in the younger age groups and higher in the higher age groups, reaching as high as 49 percent for registrants between the ages of 34 and 37.

In addition, after actual induction, about a million and a half men had to be discharged from the Army and Navy for physical or mental disability, exclusive of wounds; and an equal number had to be treated in the armed forces for diseases or defects which existed before induction.

Among the young women who applied for admission to the Women's Army Corps there was similar disability. Over one-third of those examined were rejected for physical or mental reasons.

These men and women who were rejected for military service are not necessarily incapable of civilian work. It is plain, however, that they have illnesses and defects that handicap them, reduce their working capacity, or shorten their lives.

It is not so important to search the past in order to fix the blame for these conditions. It is more important to resolve now that no American child shall come to adult life with diseases or defects which can be prevented or corrected at an early age.

Medicine has made great strides in this generation, especially during the last 4 years. We owe much to the skill and devotion of the medical profession. In spite of great scientific progress, however, each year we lose many more persons from preventable and premature deaths than we lost in battle or from war injuries during the entire war.

We are proud of past reductions in our death rates. But these reductions have come principally from public health and other community services. We have been less effective in making available to all of our people the benefits of medical progress in the care and treatment of individuals.

In the past, the benefits of modern medical science have not been enjoyed by our citizens with any degree of equality. Nor are they today. Nor will they be in the future unless government is bold enough to do something about it.

People with low or moderate incomes do not get the same medical attention as those with high incomes. The poor have more sickness, but they get less medical care. People who live in rural areas do not get the same amount or quality of medical attention as those who live in our cities.

Our new economic bill of rights should mean health security for all, regardless of residence, station, or race—everywhere in the United States.

We should resolve now that the health of this Nation is a national concern; that financial barriers in the way of attaining health shall be removed; that the health of all its citizens deserves the help of all the Nation.

There are five basic problems which we must attack vigorously if we would reach the health objectives of our economic bill of rights.

1. The first has to do with the number and distribution of doctors and hospitals. One of the most important requirements for adequate health service is professional personnel—doctors, dentists, public health and hospital administrators, nurses, and other experts.

The United States has been fortunate with respect to physicians. In proportion to population it has more than any large country in the world, and they are well trained for their calling. It is not enough, however, that we have them in sufficient numbers. They should be located where their services are needed. In this respect we are not so fortunate.

The distribution of physicians in the United States has been grossly uneven and unsatisfactory. Some communities have had enough or even too many; others have had too few. Year by year the number in our rural areas has been diminishing. Indeed, in 1940, there were 31 counties in the United States, each with more than a thousand inhabitants, in which there was not a single practicing physician. The situation with respect to dentists was even worse.

One important reason for this disparity is that in some communities there are no adequate facilities for the practice of medicine. Another reason—closely allied with the first—is that the earning capacity of the people in some communities makes it difficult if not impossible for doctors who practice there to make a living.

The demobilization of 60,000 doctors and of the tens of thousands of other professional personnel in the armed forces is now proceeding on a large scale. Unfortunately, unless we act rapidly, we may expect to see them concentrate in the places with greater financial resources and avoid other places, making the inequalities even greater than before the war.

Demobilized doctors cannot be assigned. They must be attracted. In order to be attracted, they must be able to see ahead of them professional opportunities and economic assurances.

Inequalities in the distribution of

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medical personnel are matched by inequalities in hospitals and other health facilities. Moreover, there are just too few hospitals, clinics, and health centers to take proper care of the people of the United States.

About 1,200 counties, 40 percent of the total in the country, with some 15 million people, have either no local hospitals or none that meets even the minimum standards of national professional associations.

The deficiencies are especially severe in rural and semirural areas and in those cities where changes in population have placed great strains on community facilities.

I want to emphasize, however, that the basic problem in this field cannot be solved merely by building facilities. They have to be staffed; and the communities have to be able to pay for the services. Otherwise, the new facilities will be little used.

2. The second basic problem is the need for development of public health services and maternal and child care. The Congress can be justifiably proud of its share in making recent accomplishments possible. Public health and maternal and child health programs already have made important contributions to national health. But large needs remain. Great areas of our country are still without these services. This is especially true among our rural areas; but it is true also in far too many urban communities.

Although local public health departments are now maintained by some 18,000 counties and other local units, many of these have only skeleton organizations, and approximately 40 million citizens of the United States still live in communities lacking full-time local public health service. At the recent rate of progress in developing such service, it would take more than a hundred years to cover the whole Nation.

If we agree that the national health must be improved, our cities, towns, and farming communities must be made healthful places in which to live through provision of safe water systems, sewage-disposal plants, and sanitary facilities. Our streams and rivers must be safeguarded against pollution. In addition to building a sanitary environment for ourselves and for our children, we must provide those services which prevent disease and promote health.

Services for expectant mothers and for infants, care of crippled or otherwise physically handicapped children, and inoculation for the prevention of communicable diseases are accepted public health functions. So, too, are many kinds of personal services such as the diagnosis and treatment of widespread infections like tuberculosis and venereal disease. A large part of the population today lacks many or all of these services.

Our success in the traditional public health sphere is made plain by the conquest over many communicable diseases. Typhoid fever, smallpox, and diphtheria—diseases for which there are effective controls—have become comparatively rare. We must make the same gains in reducing our maternal and infant mortality, in controlling tuberculosis, venereal disease, malaria, and other major threats to life and health. We are only beginning to realize our potentialities in achieving physical well-being for all our people.

3. The third basic problem concerns medical research and professional education.

We have long recognized that we cannot be content with what is already known about health or disease. We must learn and understand more about health and how to prevent and cure disease.

Research—well directed and continuously supported—can do much to develop ways to reduce those diseases of body and mind which now cause most sickness, disability, and premature death—diseases of the heart, kidneys, and arteries, rheumatism, cancer; diseases of childbirth, infancy, and childhood; respiratory diseases; and tuberculosis. And research can do much toward teaching us how to keep well and how to prolong healthy human life.

Cancer is among the leading causes of death. It is responsible for over 160,000 recorded deaths a year and should receive special attention. Though we already have the National Cancer Institute of the Public Health Service, we need still more coordinated research on the cause, prevention, and cure of this disease. We need more financial support for research and to establish special clinics and hospitals for diagnosis and treatment of the disease especially in its early stages. We need to train more physicians for the highly specialized services so essential for effective control of cancer.

There is also special need for research on mental diseases and abnormalities. We have done pitifully little about mental illnesses. Accurate statistics are lacking, but there is no doubt that there are at least 2 million persons in the United States who are mentally ill, and that as many as 10 million will probably need hospitalization for mental illness for some period in the course of their lifetime. A great many of these persons would be helped by proper care. Mental cases occupy more than one-half of the hospital beds, at a cost of about $500 million per year—practically all of it coming out of taxpayers' money. Each year there are 125,000 new mental cases admitted to institutions. We need more mental-disease hospitals, more out-patient clinics. We need more services for early diagnosis, and especially we need much more research to learn how to prevent mental break-down. Also, we must have many more trained and qualified doctors in this field.

It is clear that we have not done enough in peacetime for medical research and education in view of our enormous resources and our national interest in health progress. The money invested in research pays enormous dividends. If any one doubts this, let him think of penicillin, plasma, DDT powder, and new rehabilitation techniques.

4. The fourth problem has to do with the high cost of individual medical care. The principal reason why people do not receive the care they need is that they cannot afford to pay for it on an individual basis at the time they need it. This is true not only for needy persons. It is also true for a large proportion of normally self-supporting persons.

In the aggregate, all health services—from public health agencies, physicians, hospitals, dentists, nurses, and laboratories—absorb only about 4 percent of the national income. We can afford to spend more for health.

But 4 percent is only an average. It is cold comfort in individual cases. Individual families pay their individual costs and not average costs. They may be hit by sickness that calls for many times the average cost—in extreme cases for more than their annual income. When this happens they may come face to face with

economic disaster. Many families, fearful of expense, delay calling the doctor long beyond the time when medical care would do the most good.

For some persons with very low income or no income at all we now use taxpayers' money in the form of free services, free clinics, and public hospitals. Tax-supported, free medical care for needy persons, however, is insufficient in most of our cities and in nearly all of our rural areas. This deficiency cannot be met by private charity or the kindness of individual physicians.

Each of us knows doctors who work through endless days and nights, never expecting to be paid for their services because many of their patients are unable to pay. Often the physician spends not only his time and effort but even part of the fees he has collected from patients able to pay, in order to buy medical supplies for those who cannot afford them. I am sure that there are thousands of such physicians throughout our country. They cannot, and should not, be expected to carry so heavy a load.

5. The fifth problem has to do with loss of earnings when sickness strikes. Sickness not only brings doctor bills; it also cuts off income.

On an average day, there are about 7 million persons so disabled by sickness or injury that they cannot go about their usual tasks. Of these, about 3¼ millions are persons who, if they were not disabled, would be working or seeking employment. More than one-half of these disabled workers have already been disabled for 6 months; many of them will continue to be disabled for years and some for the remainder of their lives.

Every year, four or five hundred million working days are lost from productive employment because of illness and accident among those working or looking for work—about 40 times the number of days lost because of strikes on the average during the 10 years before the war. About nine-tenths of this enormous loss is due to illness and accident that is not directly connected with employment and is therefore not covered by workmen's compensation laws.

These then are the five important problems which must be solved, if we hope to attain our objective of adequate medical care, good health, and protection from the economic fears of sickness and disability.

To meet these problems, I recommend that the Congress adopt a comprehensive and modern health program for the Nation, consisting of five major parts, each of which contributes to all the others.

FIRST. *Construction of hospitals and related facilities*

The Federal Government should provide financial and other assistance for the construction of needed hospitals, health centers, and other medical, health, and rehabilitation facilities. With the help of Federal funds, it should be possible to meet deficiencies in hospital and health facilities so that modern services—for both prevention and cure—can be accessible to all the people. Federal financial aid should be available not only to build new facilities where needed but also to enlarge or modernize those we now have.

In carrying out this program, there should be a clear division of responsibilities between the States and the Federal Government. The States, localities, and the Federal Government should share in the financial responsibilities. The Federal Government should not construct or operate these hospitals. It should, however, lay down minimum national standards for construction and operation and should make sure that Federal funds are allocated to those areas and projects where Federal aid is needed most. In approving State plans and individual projects, and in fixing the national standards, the Federal agency should have the help of a strictly advisory body that includes both public and professional members.

Adequate emphasis should be given to facilities that are particularly useful for prevention of disease—mental as well as physical—and to the coordination of various kinds of facilities. It should be possible to go a long way toward knitting together facilities for prevention with facilities for cure, the large hospitals of medical centers with the smaller institutions of surrounding areas, the facilities for the civilian population with the facilities for veterans.

The general policy of Federal-State partnership which has done so much to provide the magnificent highways of the United States can be adapted to the construction of hospitals in the communities which need them.

SECOND. *Expansion of public health, maternal and child health services*

Our programs for public health and related services should be enlarged and strengthened. The present Federal-State cooperative health programs deal with general public health work, tuberculosis and venereal disease control, maternal and child health services, and services for crippled children.

These programs were especially developed in the 10 years before the war and have been extended in some areas during the war. They have already made important contributions to national health, but they have not yet reached a large proportion of our rural areas, and, in many cities, they are only partially developed.

No area in the Nation should continue to be without the services of a full-time health officer and other essential personnel. No area should be without essential public health services or sanitation facilities. No area should be without community health services, such as maternal and child health care.

Hospitals, clinics, and health centers must be built to meet the needs of the total population and must make adequate provision for the safe birth of every baby and for the health protection of infants and children.

Present laws relating to general public health and to maternal and child health have built a solid foundation of Federal cooperation with the States in administering community health services. The emergency maternity and infant care program for the wives and infants of servicemen—a great wartime service authorized by the Congress—has materially increased the experience of every State health agency and has provided much-needed care. So, too, have other wartime programs, such as venereal disease control, industrial hygiene, malaria control, tuberculosis control, and other services offered in war essential communities.

The Federal Government should cooperate by more generous grants to the States than are provided under present laws for public health services and for maternal and child health care. The program should continue

to be partly financed by the States themselves and should be administered by the States. Federal grants should be in proportion to State and local expenditures and should also vary in accordance with the financial ability of the respective States.

The health of American children, like their education, should be recognized as a definite public responsibility.

In the conquest of many diseases prevention is even more important than cure. A well-rounded national health program should, therefore, include systematic and widespread health and physical education and examinations, beginning with the youngest children and extending into community organizations. Medical and dental examinations of school children are now inadequate. A preventive health program, to be successful, must discover defects as early as possible. We should, therefore, see to it that our health programs are pushed most vigorously with the youngest section of the population.

Of course, Federal aid for community health services—for general public health and for mothers and children—should complement and not duplicate prepaid medical services for individuals, proposed by the fourth recommendation of this message.

THIRD. *Medical education and research*

The Federal Government should undertake a broad program to strengthen professional education in medical and related fields and to encourage and support medical research.

Professional education should be strengthened where necessary through Federal grants-in-aid to public and to nonprofit private institutions. Medical research, also, should be encouraged and supported in the Federal agencies and by grants-in-aid to public and nonprofit private agencies.

In my message to the Congress of September 6, 1945, I made various recommendations for a general Federal research program. Medical research, dealing with the broad fields of physical and mental illnesses, should be made effective in part through that general program and in part through specific provisions within the scope of a national health program.

Federal aid to promote and support research in medicine, public health, and allied fields is an essential part of a general research program to be administered by a central Federal research agency. Federal aid for medical research and education is also an essential part of any national health program, if it is to meet its responsibilities for high-grade medical services and for continuing progress. Coordination of the two programs is obviously necessary to assure efficient use of Federal funds. Legislation covering medical research in a national health program should provide for such coordination.

FOURTH. *Prepayment of medical costs*

Everyone should have ready access to all necessary medical, hospital, and related services.

I recommend solving the basic problem by distributing the costs through expansion of our existing compulsory social insurance system. This is not socialized medicine.

Everyone who carries fire insurance knows how the law of averages is made to work so as to spread the risk and to benefit the insured who actually suffers the loss. If, instead of the costs of sickness being paid only by those who get sick, all the people, sick and well, were required to pay premiums into an insurance fund, the pool of funds thus created would enable all who do fall sick to be adequately served without overburdening anyone. That is the principle upon which all forms of insurance are based.

During the past 15 years, hospital insurance plans have taught many Americans this magic of averages. Voluntary health insurance plans have been expanding during recent years; but their rate of growth does not justify the belief that they will meet more than a fraction of our people's needs. Only about 3 or 4 percent of our population now have insurance providing comprehensive medical care.

A system of required prepayment would not only spread the costs of medical care, it would also prevent much serious disease. Since medical bills would be paid by the insurance fund, doctors would more often be consulted when the first signs of disease occur instead of when the disease has become serious. Modern hospital, specialist, and laboratory services, as needed, would also become available to all and would improve the quality and adequacy of care. Prepayment of medical care would go a long way toward furnishing insurance against disease itself, as well as against medical bills.

Such a system of prepayment should cover medical, hospital, nursing, and laboratory services. It should also cover dental care—as fully and for as many of the population as the available professional personnel and the financial resources of the system permit.

The ability of our people to pay for adequate medical care will be increased if, while they are well, they pay regularly into a common health fund instead of paying sporadically and unevenly when they are sick. This health fund should be built up nationally in order to establish the broadest and most stable basis for spreading the costs of illness and to assure adequate financial support for doctors and hospitals everywhere. If we were to rely on State-by-State action only, many years would elapse before we had any general coverage. Meanwhile health service would continue to be grossly uneven, and disease would continue to cross State boundary lines.

Medical services are personal. Therefore, the Nation-wide system must be highly decentralized in administration. The local administrative unit must be the keystone of the system so as to provide for local services and adaptation to local needs and conditions. Locally as well as nationally, policy and administration should be guided by advisory committees in which the public and the medical professions are represented.

Subject to national standards, methods and rates of paying doctors and hospitals should be adjusted locally. All such rates for doctors should be adequate and should be appropriately adjusted upward for those who are qualified specialists.

People should remain free to choose their own physicians and hospitals. The removal of financial barriers between patient and doctor would enlarge the present freedom of choice. The legal requirement on the population to contribute involves no compulsion over the doctor's freedom to decide what services his patient needs. People will remain free to obtain and pay for medical service outside of the health insurance system if they desire, even though they are members of the system; just as they are free to send their children to private instead

of to public schools, although they must pay taxes for public schools.

Likewise physicians should remain free to accept or reject patients. They must be allowed to decide for themselves whether they wish to participate in the health insurance system full time, part time, or not at all. A physician may have some patients who are in the system and some who are not. Physicians must be permitted to be represented through organizations of their own choosing, and to decide whether to carry on in individual practice or to join with other doctors in group practice in hospitals or in clinics.

Our voluntary hospitals and our city, county, and State general hospitals, in the same way, must be free to participate in the system to whatever extent they wish. In any case they must continue to retain their administrative independence.

Voluntary organizations which provide health services that meet reasonable standards of quality should be entitled to furnish services under the insurance system and to be reimbursed for them. Voluntary cooperative organizations concerned with paying doctors, hospitals, or others for health services but not providing services directly, should be entitled to participate if they can contribute to the efficiency and economy of the system.

None of this is really new. The American people are the most insurance-minded people in the world. They will not be frightened off from health insurance because some people have misnamed it "socialized medicine."

I repeat—what I am recommending is not socialized medicine.

Socialized medicine means that all doctors work as employees of government. The American people want no such system. No such system is here proposed.

Under the plan I suggest, our people would continue to get medical and hospital services just as they do now—on the basis of their own voluntary decisions and choices. Our doctors and hospitals would continue to deal with disease with the same professional freedom as now. There would, however, be this all-important difference: whether or not patients get the services they need would not depend on how much they can afford to pay at the time.

I am in favor of the broadest possible coverage for this insurance system. I believe that all persons who work for a living and their dependents should be covered under such an insurance plan. This would include wage and salary earners, those in business for themselves, professional persons, farmers, agricultural labor, domestic employees, Government employees, and employees of nonprofit institutions and their families.

In addition, needy persons and other groups should be covered through appropriate premiums paid for them by public agencies. Increased Federal funds should also be made available by the Congress under the public assistance programs to reimburse the States for part of such premiums, as well as for direct expenditures made by the States in paying for medical services provided by doctors, hospitals, and other agencies to needy persons.

Premiums for present social insurance benefits are calculated on the first $3,000 of earnings in a year. It might be well to have all such premiums, including those for health, calculated on a somewhat higher amount such as $3,600.

A broad program of prepayment for medical care would need total amounts approximately equal to 4 percent of such earnings. The people of the United States have been spending, on the average, nearly this percentage of their incomes for sickness care. How much of the total fund should come from the insurance premiums and how much from general revenues is a matter for the Congress to decide.

The plan which I have suggested would be sufficient to pay most doctors more than the best they have received in peacetime years. The payments of the doctors' bills would be guaranteed, and the doctors would be spared the annoyance and uncertainty of collecting fees from individual patients. The same assurance would apply to hospitals, dentists, and nurses for the services they render.

Federal aid in the construction of hospitals will be futile unless there is current purchasing power so that people can use these hospitals. Doctors cannot be drawn to sections which need them without some assurance that they can make a living. Only a Nation-wide spreading of sickness costs can supply such sections with sure and sufficient purchasing power to maintain enough physicians and hospitals.

We are a rich Nation and can afford many things. But ill health which can be prevented or cured is one thing we cannot afford.

FIFTH. *Protection against loss of wages from sickness and disability*

What I have discussed heretofore has been a program for improving and spreading the health services and facilities of the Nation and providing an efficient and less burdensome system of paying for them.

But no matter what we do, sickness will, of course, come to many. Sickness brings with it loss of wages.

Therefore, as a fifth element of a comprehensive health program, the workers of the Nation and their families should be protected against loss of earnings because of illness. A comprehensive health program must include the payment of benefits to replace at least part of the earnings that are lost during the period of sickness and long-term disability. This protection can be readily and conveniently provided through expansion of our present social insurance system with appropriate adjustment of premiums.

Insurance against loss of wages from sickness and disability deals with cash benefits rather than with services. It has to be coordinated with the other cash benefits under existing social insurance systems. Such coordination should be effected when other social security measures are reexamined. I shall bring this subject again to the attention of the Congress in a separate message on social security.

I strongly urge that the Congress give careful consideration to this program of health legislation now.

Many millions of our veterans, accustomed in the armed forces to the best of medical and hospital care, will no longer be eligible for such care as a matter of right except for their service-connected disabilities. They deserve continued adequate and comprehensive health service. And their dependents deserve it, too.

By preventing illness, by assuring access to needed community and personal health services, by promoting medical research, and by protecting our people against the loss caused by sickness, we shall strengthen our national health, our national defense, and our economic productivity. We

shall increase the professional and economic opportunities of our physicians, dentists, and nurses. We shall increase the effectiveness of our hospitals and public health agencies. We shall bring new security to our people.

We need to do this especially at this time because of the return to civilian life of many doctors, dentists, and nurses, particularly young men and women.

Appreciation of modern achievements in medicine and public health has created widespread demand that they be fully applied and universally available. By meeting that demand we shall strengthen the Nation to meet future economic and social problems; and we shall make a most important contribution toward freedom from want in our land.

HARRY S. TRUMAN.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
November 19, 1945.

How Can We Assure Adequate Health Service for All the People?

By A. J. Altmeyer*

IF WE ARE to bring health services to all the people, the medical profession and the Government must work together. Obviously, the Government cannot achieve this objective without the cooperation of the medical profession, because medical service must be furnished by the medical profession. I believe it equally true that the medical profession cannot achieve the objective without the help of the Government.

At the outset, may I state plainly my opinion that there is no disagreement in our desire and determination that everybody, regardless of financial circumstances, shall be able to have adequate health services—meaning essential services of good quality. None of us wants to see anybody suffer or die for lack of medical care.

I believe also that the standards of good medical practice and of good hospital care in this country are probably second to none in the world today. The medical profession and hospital administrators have a right to be proud of the great progress these standards represent.

It is also true that, with few exceptions, the death rate in this country has declined year after year, particularly since the turn of the century. In 1900 there were 17 or 18 deaths per thousand of population, as compared with 11 per thousand in 1940. This is indeed notable progress.

Since all this is true, it may be asked, "Why is it necessary to embark on a national health program?" And, especially, "Why is it necessary for the Government to assume major responsibility?"

The answer is twofold. In the first place, while we have made notable progress in reducing the death rate, we are not the healthiest nation in the world. In the second place, while we have achieved high standards in medical and hospital care, this high-quality care is not within the actual reach of large numbers of our people. Putting it bluntly, there are many Americans this very minute who are suffering and dying needlessly for lack of medical care.

Not the Healthiest Country in the World

The statement has been made many times that we are the healthiest nation on earth, but statistics for the years just preceding the war show conclusively that we are not. Probably the best single measure of our relative health status is the infant mortality rate. In terms of this index, we stood seventh. Moreover, the comparisons in general were increasingly unfavorable to us as we proceeded from the death rates for infants to those of older groups of our population.

Even if we restrict the comparison to the white population, excluding data for Negroes, who have higher death rates, our mortality rate was by no means the lowest. For example, before the war the white male population of the United States ranked fifth among the nations of the world in the average expected years of life at the time of birth.

In spite of our wealth and our high per capita income, our death rates are not the best. Before the war, other countries, with much more modest economic resources, had gone further than we had in preserving human life.

In addition, we should not draw too much satisfaction from the fact that our death rate has declined markedly since the turn of the century. We should not forget that about 70 percent of the reduction was made by 1920 and almost all of it by 1930. We must also remember that the major part of the reduction in death rates has been due largely or almost wholly to the reduction in deaths from infectious diseases that are susceptible of mass control. If we are to have anything like a similar improvement in death rates in the future, we must not only expand our efforts in the mass control of infectious diseases but also assure more nearly universal access to individual medical care of noninfectious diseases.

What should concern us more than comparisons with other nations or with former years is the fact that we have done much better in protecting health in some places than in others, for some types of diseases than for others, and for some groups of the population than for others. The real measure of our past accomplishments and of our future opportunities is what we can do with our available knowledge. In many parts of the country and among many groups of our people, death rates are far higher than they need be. For example, many States go through a year without a single reported death from diphtheria or typhoid and paratyphoid fevers; yet other States are reporting three to four deaths from these causes per hundred thousand persons.

I cite these diseases not so much because of their present importance as causes of death but because they are diseases that can be almost completely prevented with proper public health and medical measures, and yet they continue to snuff out many lives annually.

Tuberculosis is still one of the dread killers. Yet we find that in a number of States death rates from tuberculosis are only one-fifth or one-sixth as high as in States with the highest rates. If the national death rate from tuberculosis had been as low as the lowest actually achieved in any States in 1943, some 42,000 lives would have been saved in that year.

Infant mortality illustrates similar wide differences among the States. In 1943, the State with the lowest in-

*Chairman, Social Security Board. Speech at First Annual Conference of Presidents and Other Officers of State Medical Societies, Chicago, December 2, 1945.