

## An Editorial Note

“Observation would suggest that the publisher . . . likes every succeeding edition to be sent forth ‘revised and enlarged.’ It was my secret ambition to break new ground by issuing this edition ‘revised and greatly reduced.’ But, alas, I soon realised that fulfillment of that wish was beyond me.” A. Bradford Hill’s words in the preface to the sixth edition of his classic text, *Principles of Medical Statistics*, readily characterize every editor’s challenge. Lacking his grace and wit, and with no measure of his equanimity, I found the common goal to be even more elusive for me as the new editor of *Health and Society*.

The revisions and reductions pursued under the editorial direction of George G. Reader and Oscar S. Ochs led to an excellence in scholarship which is admirable. I envy, too, their ability to be more than the “armchair critics” or “confirmed sceptics” against whom Bradford Hill cautioned. Of the scores of articles they published since 1973, many have been seminal contributions to the literature of health services research and analysis. A few have been courageous; I can recall none that was timorous.

Revision and reduction are again in order, but of a different sort. Beginning with Volume 55, *Health and Society* seeks to revise not its standards, but the thrust of their application. My intention is not to reduce the length of each issue, but rather to sharpen the focus.

*The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly/Health and Society* is a forum for communication among the academic community, the health professions, the several branches of government, and an intelligent inquiring public. The *Quarterly* draws from the rigorous evidence and thoughtful insights of many disciplines in critical examination of the health of society. The focus is on policy, and on those issues and persons shaping the content of our public, institutional, and private decisions. The process is mutual education, crossing the boundaries of academic fields and categories of work.

Volume 55, Number 1, addresses two major concerns—the development of life-extending technology and the uncontrolled costs of medical care services. The five contributors speak from as many

perspectives, but each proceeds from an historical basis to an analysis of the consequences of strategies of intervention. Ernest Gruenberg offers a provocative statement on the failures of our successes. His cogency and directness are distilled from the evidence of demography, psychiatry, and epidemiology. In his observations on regulation of technology, John K. Iglehart calls attention to the operation of professional and political accommodation. David Mechanic's analysis of trends toward bureaucratization is enlightening and sophisticated.

On the eve of the passage of Medicare and Medicaid, Nora K. Piore wrote with clarity and distinction of the need to rationalize the mix of public and private expenditures in metropolitan medical economics. An assessment of the ensuing decade, written by Piore and colleagues and drawn from a larger work in progress, is included here. Katharine G. Bauer's timely and comprehensive review of hospital rate setting is as clear as it is cautionary to those who search for strategies to control costs.

The editor hopes that future contributors will be mindful of linguistic entrapments. "For, according to our old saying, the three learned professions live by roguery on the three parts of man. The doctor mauls our bodies; the parson starves our souls; but the lawyer must be the adroitest knave, for he has to ensnare our minds. Therefore, he takes a careful delight in covering his traps and engines with a spread of deadleaf words, whereof himself knows no more than half the way to spell them" (R.D. Blackmore, *Lorna Doone*).

After July 1, 1977, the editorial offices of *Health and Society* will be finally, and firmly, established at the Milbank Memorial Fund. With the close of the academic year, and completion of my appointment as visiting professor at Dartmouth, I will devote full time to my editorial responsibilities in New York City. My colleagues and hosts at Dartmouth have been assiduous, and often anonymous, in their efforts to assist in this year of transition. I am grateful to them.

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