

# NATIONAL HEALTH ASSEMBLY

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

CONFIDENTIAL

January 6, 1949

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Cornelius A. Wood, Jr.

Executive Secretary

EXecutive 6300, ext. 4445

Dear Mrs. Lasker:

When I was in New York just before Christmas to conclude the contract negotiations with Harper and Brothers, I tried to call you to let you know the latest developments in negotiations between the Assembly and the National Health Council. Since you are out of town, the following comments will have to serve in place of person-to-person conversation.

The Council's By-law Revision Committee is expected to recommend to the annual meeting of the Council that civic organizations with established health programs be included as Associate Members. The civic organizations would, therefore, be in the same membership category as Government units which participate in the Council. (Active Members, in the proposal as I understand it, are limited to professional, voluntary health organizations. Active Members each have three votes; Associate Members each have one vote.)

While this is obviously not as all-embracing a development as might ideally be wished, I believe it will be a significant step forward if the annual meeting recognizes the principle of organic Council membership for lay institutions. The lay organizations which elect to join the Council would then be in a position, once the principle is accepted, of expanding their role within the Council.

Incidentally, Dr. Thomas Dublin says that the revised phraseology would definitely be meant to include, among others, such groups as the Parent Teachers Association, National Federation of Women's Clubs and the labor organizations. My observation of young Dr. Dublin leads me to feel that he has a very real desire to see the Council expand; and that he is anxious to press for a program which, unlike much of past history, will be relevant to the Nation's health needs, both lay and professional. I think that he has welcomed the pressure from the Assembly as a device which has strengthened his aim to revitalize the Council. Already he has held a number of regional educational meetings which are beginning to include lay representation. If the lay groups which actually join the Council -- assuming the by-law revision is approved -- give serious and genuine support to an intelligent program of health education under the auspices of the Council, it seems to me that a good deal of constructive long-range enlightenment throughout the nation can ultimately be achieved.

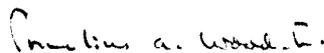
Considering the membership of our Assembly's Executive Committee, I do not believe that it would be either wise or feasible to attempt to use this organization as a nucleus for a short-range, high-pressure "education" group similar to the lobby which the AMA is evidently setting up on health insurance. Such a counter-offensive had best be undertaken by a new, separate organization. A further consideration, of course, is that the Assembly under its incorporation is not allowed to engage in propaganda activities.

Those who are closely connected with the thought of local communities all over the country, rural and urban, feel that America's people have not yet been awakened to the needs in health to anywhere nearly the extent that has occurred on the subject of the needs of education.

It seems to me, therefore, that a two-pronged attack on the nation's ignorance of the facts of its health could well be undertaken: a long-range program of joint professional-lay cooperation in health education activities, and a shorter-range pressure group. It may be that a revitalized and augmented National Health Council of the type envisaged earlier in this letter can carry the ball on the long-range side. At least there would be no harm in trying it; for, if the Council's activities subsequently prove unsatisfactory, this Assembly, or a new organization inspired by the Assembly's successes and techniques, could at any time take over the job.

With every warm wish,

Sincerely,



Cornelius A. Wood, Jr.  
Executive Secretary

Mrs. Albert D. Lasker  
President  
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