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Signs of Our Times

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in a critical inquiry of the poor. Despite that, Dr. Cassidy attended the very poor. Whether daily in his own private medical practice, or weekly in medical clinics of private and municipal hospitals of St. Louis, as well as the city jail, his services enriched both personal and physical lives of the poor. Not merely personal charity, but also humbleness characterized his medical and social interests. Thus his intellect and soul, transcending material interests and personal achievement, obeyed the law of love and charity. "After all," he once said, "it is a small effort. We all could do more of this charitable work—giving more freely of the talents God has given us."

Conspicuously prominent in Dr. Cassidy's ventures to serve humanity was the formation of a medical care program for needy citizens. In 1953 he organized a group of physicians to provide charity medical care for human-beings living in a small, poor mining community fifty miles southwest of St. Louis. Members of the Catholic Physicians' Guild, representing four Catholic hospitals in St. Louis provided citizens of Old Mines, Missouri, with medical examinations and care, with preventive immunization of children, as well as with transportation to hospital facilities in St. Louis. The President of the St. Louis County Medical Society described the efforts of Dr. Cassidy's project aptly: "The work done by these physicians in the finest tradition of the medical profession." Dr. Cassidy neatly expressed a humble view: "We were searching for something we could do with the brains God has given us. The poor people in the Old Mines area seemed to need our help the most."

Dr. Cassidy seemed to move harmoniously in God's grace; he was a daily communicant. He seemed to move in knowledge of spirit and emotion of man; he was a daily attendant to the poor. Thus, his love of God and man.

He leaves not only a legacy of cherished personal memories, but enriched examples of spiritual confidence—all this was known and esteemed in him. Yet, Dr. Cassidy, who preferred to work in humble anonymity, would choose the retained simply: in hearts and prayers of those nearest him in his three-fold vocation, family—wife, children and grandchildren; patients and associates; Church.

Dr. Robert Hickey—friend and associate of Dr. Cassidy, founding member of the charity medical care program in Old Mines, Missouri, and recent President of the Catholic Physicians' Guild of St. Louis—came to Washington, D.C. to accept for Mrs. Cassidy and family the Physician of The Year Award. The scroll and medallion we present are but meager evidence of the esteem of those who knew the worth of this fine man.

**Signs of Our Times**

**WILLIAM J. EGAN, M.D.**

**THE White House Conference on Aging was held in Washington D.C. January 9-12, 1961. It was two years in planning and had resulted from an enabling bill introduced into the legislature by the Honorable John E. Fogarty, Congressman from the State of Rhode Island. In his words, "There has been a great deal of talk about aging and what we need now is action." He felt that five areas demanded attention: employment, income, housing, free time and health. He amplified, moreover, that the Conference should not be a goal in itself but a 'launching platform' for new programs of action by the States and communities.

For two years prior to the national session, State delegations met and evolved recommendations. These were listed by the national committee and published in an anthology as a guide to subsequent discussions.

Delegates to the Conference were both State and national, numbering some 2,800. State delegates were appointed by the various Governors to represent all fields of service to the aged. The number of delegates was proportional to the population; e.g., New York and California with one hundred, ranging downward to Nevada, Wyoming, and Delaware with ten. On the national level, one hundred and fifty organizations sent six hundred sixty delegates. The National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds was represented by the following committee: Dr. Alice Holubek, Shreveport, La.; Dr. Clement P. Cunningham, Rock Island, Ill.; Dr. Gerard P. J. Griffin, Brooklyn N.Y.; and your scribe.

Names, strange bed-fellows to your chairman, listed among the national organizations sending delegates were the following:

Altrusa International, Inc. (professional women)
Distilling, Rectifying Wine and Allied Workers' International of America
Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.
International Union of United Brewery, Flour, Cereal, Soft Drink and Distilling Workers of America

These delegates sat at the conference tables with those of the Little Sisters of the Poor, the Menonite Mission Board, the Lutheran Church, and the Baptist brotherhood. The motivation of all delegates was an inspiration to behold. It could happen only in America.

The plan of the Conference was well executed. A plenary session
of all delegates opened the meetings on Monday. Then the representatives divided into ten groups to discuss:

I. Population Trends
II. Health and Medical Care
III. Social Services
IV. Housing
V. Education
VI. Role and Training of Professional Personnel
VII. Free Time Activities
VIII. Research in Gerontology
IX. Organization: Local, State, Local Voluntary, Federal

These groups were oriented by addresses from authorities in each field. The groups then divided into sections and again oriented to the problems of the respective subjects. These sections divided into work-groups of twenty members each under the direction of a chairman, associate chairman, and recorder. The work-shop occupied one and one half days. Between sessions, the recorder synthesized recommendations.

On the third day, the pattern was reversed by regrouping until the whole was reassembled with final recommendations before the plenary session. This meeting was held from 7:00 until 11:00 p.m. on Wednesday and 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. on Thursday. These recommendations will be officially presented as the net effort of many people of good-will.

A few observations are worth reporting prior to this final publication by the National Committee:

1. If no other good shall result, this meeting was with the energy expended in that propaganda all segments of the nation to the increase in the numbers of elderly citizens and their needs in our society.

2. The sentiment of the delegates was overwhelmingly in favor of pre-payment of retirement sickness benefits during the working years. This, despite the fact that the A.M.A. bloc attempted by parliamentary procedure and propaganda, to scuttle any recommendation along this line. A.M.A. policy-makers had such poor public relations that further serious damage to reputation was suffered.

3. Of the senior citizens it was shown that only six percent are pathological at any one period. Hence, the doctor plays a pro-rata role in the total care of the aging. Those involved in ancillary services proved by action and by expression that their motivation is as ethical and as Vincentian as the doctor. In fact, because these people do not have to measure their results by the labels of "cure" or "incurable" they evidenced greater hope for the comfort and the rehabilitation of the aging.

4. The common denominator of "interest in one's fellowman" erased totally the lines of race, color, creed or political affiliation. It was a thrill to have been part of this unified American.

A caution should be voiced, however. One sign of these times, by inference, suggests that both national and State legislatures should enact specific laws to avoid "conflict of interests." Should federal resources become available for care of the aging, nursing homes, chronic hospitals and hostels will afford so attractive a business venture that politicians may seek to control and even to own such licenses. Advance legislation could secure to our senior citizens proper care and insure the avoidance of political scandals.

THE DRIVER'S PRAYER

Grant me, O Sacred Heart, a steady hand and watchful eye.
That no one shall be hurt as I pass by.
Thou gavest life, I pray no act of mine
May take away or mar that Gift of Thine.
Shelter those, dear Lord, who bear me company,
From the evils of fire and all calamity.
Teach me to use my car for others need;
Nor miss through love, of undue speed
The beauty of the world; that thus I may
With joy and courtesy, go on my way.
Oh Sacred Heart, My Auto Companion, Have Mercy on Me.