

a continual process of balancing the demands of automation with the mental and manual skills of the workers, young and old.

Concern for the older citizen is not only centered around employment, although that is the essential. Sociological factors such as housing, recreation and sense of belonging in a community are also important.

Change in Housing Approach

In this area, the National Council's executive director, Mrs. Geneva Mathiasen, feels that planning should be based on the premise that older citizens are productive members of society, not just worn-out bodies and spirits sitting around waiting to die.

Much has been done in the last few years in the field of especially designed housing for older persons. This type housing, it should be emphasized, is not in the old-folks-home category. Rather, it is non-institutional housing, often financed like low or middle income housing—with Federal subsidy.

Such housing is designed to be as accident proof as possible. It features small buildings, no stairs, low shelves, easy-open windows, non-skid floors, bathroom support rods, and signal systems for emergencies. Many units have dining rooms for residents.

Recently, the National Council has completed a directory of between 500 and 600 housing units for the elderly across the

country. The Council, located at 49 W. 45th St., New York City, is prepared to act as a clearing house for those interested.

One relatively new aspect of the problem is just now starting to get attention. This is described in the lingo of the professional as working with the "mentally frail" left to their own luck through absence of family, desertion or poverty.

Federal statistics show that 300,000 persons in the United States who draw Social Security are not competent to handle their own money.

What to do with them is the primary question facing the researchers. Some have relatives or close friends to handle their finances. Others have only themselves.

Most of those receive no attention until some act of peculiar behavior brings them to the attention of the neighbors, and ultimately the police. In Detroit, for example, 5,000 elderly persons were turned over to the police in a single year because they were acting strangely and nobody knew what else to do with them.

This, like all other phases of our society's approach to the problems of the elderly, needs and is getting increased attention. Hopefully, the solutions will multiply faster than the problems so that the dream of peace and prosperity can be realized by Americans, regardless of age.

• Science News Letter, 87:298 May 8, 1965

PUBLIC HEALTH

Health Program Evaluated

► THE BILLION-DOLLAR program of the Government's National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Md., received both praise and criticism in the citizens' study committee report to President Johnson.

The committee stated that the current billion-dollar budget of NIH is not too high. It would even add a million dollars in overhead to pay a non-Government advisory group to make sure the NIH decisions are sound.

"We suspect that there are few, if any, one-billion-dollar segments of the Federal budget that are buying more valuable services for the American people than that administered by the National Institutes of Health," the report said.

On the critical side is the recommendation that the new non-Government advisory group, to be called the Policy and Planning Council, should be established "to operate at the level of the director of NIH." Two dozen "highly qualified and analytical professionals, with the usual quantity of assistants and supporting services" would be worth a million dollars a year, the report said.

Such a group of prominent non-Government scientists and laymen, continually reviewing the major NIH decisions, will provide essential assurance that "the great powers of the Government are not being unwisely or arbitrarily employed in the vital field of health research."

The report stated there is serious question "whether NIH can indefinitely remain the strong and positive influence it has become unless a way is found to provide such assurance."

Criticism is implied in the suggestion that the power of the separate Institutes and Institute Councils should be lessened while the authority of the director of all the Institutes be increased.

Why a single group of cancer chemotherapy collaborative projects should be allotted \$30 million when less than \$1 million in total goes into such directed collaborative efforts in the entire field of arthritis and metabolic diseases is seriously questioned."

Dr. Dean E. Wooldridge of Los Angeles, Calif., was chairman of the study committee, whose report was titled "Biomedical Science and Its Administration." Thirteen members made up the committee, but nearly 1,000 persons cooperated, including NIH officials.

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Do You Know?

Aedes aegypti, a mosquito which carries the virus of the yellow fever, has been eradicated from 16 countries in the Western Hemisphere.

The direction of most acute vision for dolphin and great barracuda is straight forward, while that for sailfish and white marlin is slightly upward and forward.

The phosphate content of the Arabian Sea is approximately five times that of other oceans.

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