

Comments by  
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Charlotte, N. C.  
6/20/74

The Old North State Medical Society has worked long and hard to develop and to maintain a strong pro-people attitude. Time and again it has spoken out on issues of vital concern not only to its professional membership but to people all across North Carolina.

Last year in its 86th Annual Convention your society adopted a resolution to "endorse the establishment of a new degree-granting medical school as the most logical and feasible approach toward a solution to the problem of the physician shortage in North Carolina."I

In explaining this resolution to the press one of your leaders commented that the anti-new school attitude adopted by a slim majority of the larger North Carolina Medical Society a few weeks before your meeting last year seemed to constitute an anti-people attitude on the part of the medical profession. He went on to state "professionals ought to be involved in the design of a program speaking to this important question."

I read newspapers just as do most people in public and political life, and I watched with no surprise the rather casual manner this story was treated in the major papers a year ago. It rapidly sank to oblivion in sharp contrast to the anti-resolution I mentioned earlier.

I was surprised, however, by the number of small newspapers all over the state who took note of your action and praised it. These newspapers characterized your approach as "refreshing", as "an important and progressive stand", and commended you for coming to grips with one of the state's greatest problems.

Now in June 1974 it appears that your voice was heard. Your recorded stand was joined by many other people-oriented organizations and groups and the 1974 Session of the General Assembly listened and acted responsibly to meet the demands of the people. The legislative action to expand the school at East Carolina specifically directs that it

is "to emphasize the training of primary care physicians, particularly in family practice" and is to make a special effort to recruit and to educate racial minorities."

Although the new school is instructed by the Board of Governors to plan only the first two years of medical education at present, I feel certain that it will proceed on to degree-granting status in order to meet the mandate of the people for a school that will take minority students, rural students, deeply motivated students and educate them for the practice of family medicine.

I understand that several of you have been asked to help plan some aspects of expanded school at East Carolina. Your interest and willingness to be involved is another example of your proven concern for people and for ways to improve services to people. I for one want you to know that your efforts are not going unrecognized.

Perhaps as the plans for expansion of the people-oriented medical school proceed more definitive plans will be forthcoming from the state's higher education authorities to address the problem of exporting our minority students for their professional education.

Not only is that action philosophically indefensible in today's society, it is a tremendous loss to the people of our state. Only a few months ago one of our state legislators contacted Meharry Medical College and requested information which is of great concern to all of us. He discovered that only 32% of those North Carolinians graduated in medicine or dentistry at Meharry over the past 24 years of the SREB contract have returned to North Carolina to practice.

Certainly we must make every possible effort to educate our own native-borne students, to train them within our state, and to convince them that their brightest future is right here in North Carolina where the need for their services is so great.

The Old North State Medical Society <sup>has</sup> rendered great service to North Carolina. The challenge before you now is to do even more in the months and years ahead. I pledge

to you that I will help in your efforts in every way possible.

For our goals are identical — constant concern and effort to improve the lot of the people of North Carolina. Your record and mine in these concerns are there for all to see; I am proud of both.