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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
SWEARING-IN CEREMONY
OF
THEODORE COOPER
AS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
AND
DONALD FREDRICKSON
AS
DIRECTOR OF THE
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

11:29 A.M. EDT

Secretary Weinberger, Assistant Secretary Cooper, and Mrs. Cooper, Director Fredrickson, and Mrs. Fredrickson, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

At the outset, let me thank each and every one of you here for the very warm and friendly welcome. Let me express to you, on behalf of all of those who are outside, my gratitude and appreciation for the warmth of their welcome. I am deeply grateful.

Actually, I am here this morning for several very good reasons.

First, and most important, I want to recognize and wish to honor two outstanding men who are taking office today, one as Assistant Secretary for Health, and the other as Director of the National Institutes of Health.

Second, I wish to thank from the bottom of my heart Cap Weinberger for the outstanding job he has done as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. Cap will be missed very greatly by me, and I am sure by all of you, and in the broadest context by all Americans.

We thank you very, very much, Cap.

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HEW, as we all know, is a huge and very complex department, but as a result of Cap's leadership and responsible decisions, it is in better shape now than it has been in its entire 22-year history.

I think it is a fair assessment that HEW is operating at peak efficiency today, and its programs are more effectively reaching those who are truly in need. Obviously, there is always plenty of room for improvement, but on any fair assessment, a great job is being done, and I thank him and I thank you.

Finally, I wish to pay a very long-deserved tribute to the National Institutes of Health. The fact that the two men we are honoring today are both products of this institution is testimony to its greatness as a training ground for leaders in health and in medicine.

Over the years that I was in the Congress, I have watched the NIH grow into the world's foremost medical institution. I followed your achievements, the breakthroughs you have achieved here, and in laboratories which you support around the world, and I have watched this growth from its inception--as a Congressman, as Vice President and now as President.

Through your accomplishments, NIH has become a symbol of hope, not just for the patients who are here in this or the other building, but all people everywhere. Yet, despite our present sophisticated technology and the best efforts of our physicians and hospitals, millions and millions of persons still die or are crippled each year from diseases such as cancer, heart difficulties, kidney difficulties, arthritis and others.

We -- and I use this in the broadest context -- people all over the world, look to you here at NIH, to you, Dr. Fredrickson, to develop the new knowledge necessary to bring their diseases under control and to make that knowledge available to our physicians and hospitals in the form of new methods of prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

But research and the development of new knowledge is only part of our responsibility to the health of our people. Through the Public Health Service, which Dr. Cooper heads as Assistant Secretary for Health, we can help the private sector develop its capacity, the essential capacity to make quality health care at a reasonable price a reality for all America.

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For the past year, HEW in its Public Health Service has made significant progress toward the unifying of our Federal health effort so that we can more effectively attack the complex problems besetting our health care system, problems such as high cost with few built-in controls and the shortages of the right kind of physicians and other health workers in the right place at the right time.

Under Dr. Cooper's leadership, we expect to intensify our effort to focus properly the resources of the Federal Government where appropriate, on these problems. And we will work with and not against the private sector in this effort.

Thomas Jefferson once remarked that health is the first requisite after morality. The overall survival of our Nation depends in large measure on the health of its people. We can only be strong, prosperous, productive people to the extent that we are also healthy people.

Health is related to many things -- good jobs, adequate housing, good education -- but no society can achieve good health without an adequate health care system that responds to the needs of people, regardless of where they live or their economic or social station in life.

The leadership that we are swearing in today can strengthen the sound foundation of our Nation's health. It can work with the private sector to help develop new cures and deliver the best possible treatment to all Americans. Above all else, it is that goal I am here to reaffirm today.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 11:39 A.M. EDT)