

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

CONGRESSMAN FARNUM ASKS

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PUBLICATION

SPEED IN WAR ON MENTAL ILLS

Congressman Billie S. Farnum (D. Mich.) discussed the Federal government's role in the fight on mental illls at the 2nd annual national Seminar on Mental Health and Mental Retardation in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Monday, September 13.

It was sponsored by the United States Jaycees and was held in the University of Michigan's Medical Science Building.

Farnum, a champion of modern community therapy as against the "bricks and mortar approach", serves on the House Appropriations Sub-Committee which has charge of allocating funds in the entire health area.

Farnum said he is concerned over the slow pace at which States^{are} using available Federal funds for a "bold new approach" which President Kennedy had envisioned as means to save many long stays in crowded State mental hospitals.

So far, he said, only six states have won approval for local centers offering preventative as well as curative treatment.

Use of new "community treatment" methods, Congressman Farnum reported, make it possible to treat successfully two out of three schizophrenics within six months--against an average of 11 years for conventional methods.

Aside from prevention of individual suffering, he pointed out, new treatments can achieve economies through restoring to productive life thousands who otherwise would be supported from taxes. He quoted experts as saying that new methods have already eliminated need for "bricks and mortar" expenditures of two billion dollars.

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"Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, acting largely upon the 1961 recommendations of the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health, set the Nation on the road to solving its mental health problems, " he added.

"Congress has supplied the funds for a bold new approach to treatment of both mental retardation and illness. We possess the knowledge needed to prevent most of the social disability which once resulted from mental illness and we know that most persons classed as mentally retarded can lead useful lives. Meanwhile extensive research continues into the causes and treatment of both maladies.

"But all of our knowledge, all the funds, all the research and all the concern of groups like this will be wasted if States do not fulfill their end of the partnership.

"It is the States that must apply the knowledge, disburse the funds wisely, translate research into new programs and harness the enthusiasm of interested organizations if our war on mental illness and retardation is to be won. "

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