

TALKING POINTS FOR AWARD DINNER

June 25, 1983

NATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AWARD  
from  
NATIONAL JEWISH HOSPITAL AND RESEARCH CENTER  
NATIONAL ASTHMA CENTER

- o I would first like to commend Ken Meredith and his associates for the impressive campaign they have waged to raise funds for the National Jewish Hospital and Research Center/National Asthma Center. The spirit of giving which has been demonstrated by all those who contributed to this effort is the key to the continued existence of medical centers treating persons with costly, chronic illnesses.
- o A quick look at some pertinent statistics on health care expenditures, with which many of you are probably already familiar, really brings to the fore the importance of private donations to medical institutions such as this one. For instance, in 1981 the health care costs for one person averaged \$1,225 per year. Of course, this average fails to illustrate the fact that only a small percentage of the population accounts for the majority of the Nation's health care expenditures. There are, therefore, a number of individuals who face health care expenses which they simply cannot afford, and for which they depend on outside sources, be they government or private, for aid.
- o Hospital care is the fastest growing cost component of national health care spending. We paid \$118 billion in 1981 alone for hospital care, which amounted to 41.2 percent of total health care spending that year.
- o Having taken note of the enormous cost to both providers and patients of furnishing quality hospital care to someone with a chronic illness, we can better appreciate the instrumental role private donations play in sustaining institutions like National Jewish Hospital.
- o The 1981 Economic Recovery Tax Act included several tax provisions to encourage charitable donations.
- o For individuals, Congress allowed a charitable contribution deduction for taxpayers who do not itemize deductions. These are generally lower income taxpayers.
- o This "above the line" deduction is limited, and "sunset" in 1986. These limitations do not reflect unwillingness to encourage charitable giving, but reflect Congressional concern that new tax incentives should be reexamined periodically to insure that they are operating effectively to accomplish their intended goals.



- o In 1981, Congress also increased the maximum amount of charitable contributions allowed for corporations and liberalized incentives for corporate donations of scientific property for research or experimentation by colleges and universities. Here again, Congress was required to craft this new tax provision very carefully, to insure that it encouraged added contributions without giving windfall benefits to certain corporations.
- o This tension between laudable purposes, and potential abuses, runs throughout the tax code. It makes the task of reforming the tax law difficult. But meaningful reform is not impossible, as the 1981 and 1982 tax acts demonstrated. These acts lowered the tax rates and broadened the tax base--tax reform goals shared by many Americans.
- o I think the Center's ability to muster such a sizeable amount of money in so short a time speaks to its considerable support in the Wichita community. The spirit of voluntarism which this successful fund-raising drive represents is very significant, and I'm proud you have invited me to be part of this effort. Voluntary contributions are absolutely vital to the continued existence of large tertiary institutions like this one. In the face of diminishing Federal resources devoted to health care, we will have to rely more on the private sector to help us support many of these institutions.
- o In choosing which organizations to support, the private sector may well prove to be a far better judge of the worth of a given institution than the government ever has been. In this instance, the private sector has made its judgment very clearly in support of the National Jewish Hospital and Research Center, something for which I'm sure you are very proud.
- o Being honored here tonight with the National Humanitarian Award has a very special meaning to me, not only personally, but in a professional sense as well. As chairman of the Senate committee which has jurisdiction over the Federal health, welfare, and income security programs, and chairman of a nutrition subcommittee, my work entails quite literally the definition of a humanitarian, i.e., a person who promotes human welfare and social reform.
- o Fulfilling these duties is a constant challenge, and I depend on the input of institutions such as the National Jewish Hospital in being apprised of the most effective and economical ways to provide health care. I certainly hope that I can live up to the standards which the National Humanitarian Award entails, and encourage you to communicate your suggestions and ideas on health policy reforms to me. I



firmly believe that we at the Federal level can benefit immeasurably from the expertise of those people who are directly involved in areas about which we make decisions. I strongly urge you to play a part in this process.

- o In gathering some background material for this occasion, I was drawn to some of the teachings that are a large part of Judaic culture. The Hebrew word for charity, for example, says a great deal about the attitude of all those who contributed to this fund-raising drive. "Tse-da-kah" (pronounced "sa-da-ka"), as many of you surely know, technically means "righteous conduct." The use of this word in Jewish culture to connote charity signifies the sense of sacred duty which is placed on giving. This is an admirable quality -- one from which we could all benefit by acquiring.
- o An old story of two Jewish sages, Hillel (pronounced "hill-el") and Shammai (pronounced "sham-eye"), has Shammai explaining the essence of Judaism stemming from a single verse in the Bible. It reads, "Thou shall love thy fellow as thyself." It is said that all the other laws of Judaism are merely extensions of this one. And that central theme really captures the true spirit of giving in which you, and many others not present here tonight, have taken part.
- o For centuries, Jewish culture has lauded charity as an activity that uplifts the soul, equally as important as all the other 613 precepts of the Torah (pronounced "toor-a"). The strength of the teachings of this heritage must certainly be clear to the many sick people who will benefit from the National Jewish Hospital/National Asthma Center.
- o Given this heritage, it is perhaps fitting that I end my comments with a quote from Hillel (pronounced "hill-el"), a well-known first century B.C. Talmudic scholar: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? "And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"



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