

An Asset To Society

NINA GALLIN

The illnesses of four out of ten people go untreated. Thirty-eight per cent of all small loans made are to pay doctor bills. Twenty to forty per cent of the doctor bills in this country go unpaid.

These are rather startling facts. It has been very truly stated that only the very wealthy and the very poor are able to get medical attention. The wealthy are well able to afford a doctor and medicine, hospital bills and nurses' bills, all the things necessary in curing illness. The doctor, in turn, caters to the wealthy family, for he knows that by charging higher prices for services rendered to these people, he will be compensated for the failure of some less fortunate family to pay his fee.

A poor family, on the other hand, has the benefit of free clinics. Of course, these clinics are not restricted to the poor only, but the so-called middle class would seldom accept this type of "charity." It is the in-between person who suffers most when illness and disease strike. This is the man who works for a salary, spends it each month, and is unable to put much aside for the proverbial rainy day. This is the man who is more likely to come in contact with disease, for he generally works with large numbers of people; his constitution is likely to be worn down, for this is the person who works hardest. When illness does strike, not only is his means of sustenance cut off, but the additional burden of large doctor and medical bills faces him.

Doctors themselves are not as well off as many people believe them to be. Their profession requires a minimum of

seven years' college work to obtain an M. D. degree, an expensive college education, expenditure of from two to four thousand dollars to purchase preliminary office equipment, and additional expense for the upkeep of an office and, in many cases, a nurse-assistant.

If all people could afford doctors' fees, then most disease would be treated and all doctors would make a living; unfortunately that ideal situation is far from true. Many American doctors are unable to make a good living, either because they cannot afford to set up an office with up-to-date equipment or because many of their patients are unable to pay the fees. Even then we could face the fact that we have too many doctors in the United States if it weren't true that over half of our illnesses go untreated, if facts didn't tell us that the United States leads the world in smallpox, venereal disease, deficiency disease, and maternal mortality. Surely some solution is possible to aid both the doctor and the American public.

Following a recent study of state medicine, I have become convinced that this is the simplest and most beneficial way of solving this problem. Under this plan clinics would be supported by the state, staffed by good physicians and supplied with the best equipment. The doctors would be paid adequate salaries which would be sustained by taxes levied for that specific purpose. In that way the middle class would not be ashamed to come to the clinics for assistance, for they would know that they paid for this assistance in the same way that they paid

for the sidewalks on which they walk. They would have the further advantage of having more expert care, for a number of experts working together can accomplish a great deal more good than one doctor who would possibly only have to send his patient on to another physician specializing in a particular field of medicine.

The state could use part of these same funds for public health. The public could be educated in preventing illness; public sanitation would have more possibility of being assured.

According to this plan, those doctors who wished to could retain their private practices on the fee system for those of their patients who still wished treatment by their own personal doctors. Even this system will be changed somewhat following the war, whether state medicine is adopted to a great extent or not. Doctors will no longer maintain private offices, but will group together with four or more in an office, arranging hours that don't conflict, managing to use common

equipment, and having only one office girl for the whole group. In this way, office upkeep expense is reduced to a minimum, equipment used by all in the office costs much less, and these doctors have the benefit of each other's advice. According to some plans, the offices will even provide laboratories in which the doctors can experiment.

The majority of the good American doctors today are in the armed services. These doctors have become accustomed to working together and they have had good equipment. Many of them have closed their offices completely, and a large number of these will have no desire to go to great expense to reopen their offices and buy up-to-date equipment (for that, too, is constantly changing). These men have stated preferences for state medicine or, at least, for group work. If it is what the physicians wish and if it will benefit society as much as I believe it will, state medicine is something which we all must consider a necessary part of our future.

Fashions Of Spring

BARBARA BARD

*The sun, above the mountain's head,
A freshening lustre mellow
Through all the long green fields has
spread,
His first sweet evening yellow.*
(William Wordsworth)

Queenly spring is here in her cloak of moss-green, trimmed with folds of orchid, white, and yellow. Her fair head is crowned with a golden, glowing sun, and a pale

blue and white veil. She brings with her a treasure chest, lavishly filled with natural beauty. Her warm soul gently penetrates through the long, raw winter's cold.

Spring is like a spectacular fashion show, known and seen only by those who appreciate her grace and fantasy. Nature style shows are very different from ours. Their styles do not have to be constantly changing to remain popular. They are simple and conservative while, at the same