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and Surgeons**

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From the Archives

Our Greatest Opponent

William C. Black, M.D.

Socialized medicine has for several years cast its sinister shadow over our professional and private lives. We have *all had* to think about it. We all know it to be a bad thing. A few years ago many of us had the craven cowardly defeatist attitude of the victim waiting for the knife of the guillotine to fall. On every hand we heard: "There is nothing we can do about it," "It's coming, it is inevitable," "It is the next natural step in the tide of medical affairs," and so forth. And we were all discouraged by the unfortunate and apparently ill-advised foray of organized medicine into the Washington, D.C., case where organized medicine took a beating by the Supreme Court of the United States. Things looked bad.

But some of us were not willing to lie on our backs like a bunch of yellow dogs and let our opponents kick us around at will. We decided our professional and personal freedom was worth fighting for. By far the most important thing that the American medical profession has done is to establish the *Association of American Physicians and Surgeons*. We have armed ourselves with the absolutely irresistible strength of AAPS non-participation to advance boldly and confidently (on a sure legal footing and on a powerful nation-wide scale) with a sound, progressive, positive, modern program of legislation, public relations, and medical economics, which will surely guarantee to ourselves and to the American Public—our patients—the preservation of freedom and human dignity in matters concerning private personal health.

If our efforts are to be of maximum efficiency, if our strategy is to be fully effective, we must do two things. *First* we must keep our goals in clear focus. We must not let them become clouded by any selfish personal or professional interests. We must not let them become blurred by the smudge of hatefulness, vindictiveness, pride, arrogance, or prejudice. We must not let them be obscured by indolence, indifference, or discouragement. We must constantly remember: "The ultimate test of all AAPS actions shall always be the public interest." And *second*, we must accurately and intelligently appraise the strength and

importance of those tangible and intangible forces which oppose us. What is the identity actually of our greatest opponent in our struggle to defeat the forces of regimentation, compulsion, coercion, and despotism?

Our greatest opponent is not Murray, Wagner, Dingell, and others of their ilk. Our greatest and most powerful opponent is not Isadore Sidney Falk and his army of workers in the Bureau of Research and Statistics in the Federal Security Administration. Our greatest opponent is not Mike Davis and his almost unlimited funds from Rosenwald Foundation. Our greatest opponent is not the bosses of the C.I.O., the A.F. of L., not Governor Warren of California or President Truman, not Communism or the International Labour Organisation. It is not even the rank growth of the weeds of Paternalism planted so widely in our social structure during the reign of Franklin the Great.

No, powerful as they all are individually and collectively as pavers of the Road to Serfdom, we have an even more powerful if less tangible opponent.

Our most powerful and ominous opponent fortunately is also our strongest potential ally. He is the inertia of every American physician who does not inform himself of the sinister significance of Socialized medicine and who does not throw his weight against it in whole-hearted, voluntary, intelligent, persistent opposition. He is your colleague and mine. He is Doctor Inertia.

Until that day when a substantial majority of American Physicians have voluntarily chosen to affiliate themselves personally with AAPS, we must keep our eye on the Bull's eye; we must keep our eye on the grey blurred lethargic unthinking Bull's eye—the countenance of our greatest, yes, our only really vital opponent, our friend and colleague who has not soberly, sincerely, and enthusiastically affixed his signature to an AAPS application blank.

[Presented at the 1947 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons]