

[c. 2/22/1966]

POSITION OF THE NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION WITH
REFERENCE TO MEMBERSHIP IN ITS ORGANIZATION AND RACE

AS PRESIDENT OF THE NMA I WAS GREATLY SURPRISED SEVERAL DAYS AGO TO LEARN THAT A WHITE DOCTOR OF ITALIAN-AMERICAN BACKGROUND, HAD LODGED FORMAL CHARGES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE MANHATTAN CENTRAL MEDICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, A COMPONENT SOCIETY OF THE NMA. THESE CHARGES WERE FILED WITH THE NEW YORK COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, OF WHICH EARL BROWN IS THE COMMISSIONER.

SUBSEQUENTLY I HAVE BEEN ASKED FOR A STATEMENT OF POLICY ON ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS OF THE NMA (AND ITS COMPONENT SOCIETIES OR LOCAL CHAPTERS) WITH REFERENCE TO RACE. IN ANSWERING THIS INQUIRY I HAVE NO HESITANCY IN SAYING THAT SINCE THE FOUNDING OF THE NMA IN 1895 THE POLICY HAS BEEN ONE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF RACE. THE BEST EXPRESSION OF ITS POLICY REGARDING RACE IS PERHAPS THE OFTEN QUOTED STATEMENT OF DR. C. V. ROMAN, ONE OF THE NMA FOUNDERS AND AN EARLY PRESIDENT, WHO SAID "THIS ASSOCIATION WAS CONCEIVED IN NO SPIRIT OF RACIAL EXCLUSIVENESS, FOSTERING NO ETHNIC ANTAGONISMS, BUT BORN OF THE EXIGENCIES OF THE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENT."

THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY STATEMENT IN THE NMA CONSTITUTION, NATIONALLY OR LOCALLY, DIRECT OR IMPLIED, AIMED AT EXCLUSION OF WHITE DOCTORS.

II

THE PRACTICAL ASPECT OF THE MATTER HISTORICALLY IS THAT THERE HAS BEEN IN THE PAST ONLY A TOKEN WHITE MEMBER HERE AND THERE IN ONE OR TWO SOUTHERN COMPONENT SOCIETIES IN THE LAST TWO OR THREE YEARS.

IT IS LAMENTABLE THAT THE CHARGE OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION SHOULD BE RAISED AGAINST THE PREDOMINENTLY NEGRO NMA AT THIS TIME. ON AUGUST 10, 1965 WHEN I BECAME PRESIDENT, I ANNOUNCED DURING MY INAUGURAL ADDRESS THAT ONE OF THE PRINCIPLE GOALS OF THIS ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE INTERRATION OF THE NMA. I APPOINTED A SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE TO SOLICIT MEMBERSHIP OF OUTSTANDING WHITE DOCTORS AS WELL AS YOUNG NEGRO DOCTORS WHO HAVE NOT JOINED. THIS WAS APPROVED BY OUR HOUSE OF DELEGATES AND TRUSTEE BOARD. TO MY KNOWLEDGE AT LEAST 50 OUTSTANDING WHITE DOCTORS HAVE JOINED SINCE AUGUST OR THEIR APPLICATIONS ARE BEING PROCESSED. THE ASSOCIATION GENERALLY IS VERY PLEASED BECAUSE MANY OF THESE MEN ARE DOCTORS OR FACULTY MEMBERS OF SUCH SCHOOLS AS YALE, HOWARD, CORNELL, U. OF ILLINOIS, SYRACUSE, U. OF MARYLAND, U. OF CALIFORNIA, COLUMBIA ETC. SOME ARE CITY OR STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONERS AND ONE IS AN ASSISTANT MEDICAL DEAN.

THE NEW YORK MATTER IS BEING INVESTIGATED. IF IT IS FOUND THAT ANY LOCAL COMPONENT OR CONSTITUENT SOCIETY OF THE NMA APPEARS TO BE REFUSING MEMBERSHIPS ON THE

III

BASIS OF COLOR, RELIGION, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN, SUMMARY
STEPS WILL BE TAKEN TO ADMIT ANY ETHICAL PRACTICING
PHYSICIAN DIRECTLY INTO THE NMA OR TO REVOKE THE
AFFILIATION OF THE SOCIETY CONCERNED.

COPY