

# Perspectives

## in the Practice of Public Health

**D**URING the past half century the concepts and the practice of public health have undergone an evolutionary development of increasing momentum and significance. In the wake of the great sanitary awakening and the golden age of bacteriology came the control of communicable disease and the management of the primary threats to infant and maternal survival. Latterly there has come more adequate medical care, a closer linkage of curative and preventive medicine, and the beginnings of serious attacks on the chronic diseases through organized research and community action. There has been increasing recognition of the broader implications of the terms "environmental health" and "occupational health," of the health implications of a maturing United States population, and of the impact on health of a shrinking world. Yet these are but a few of the components which must be dealt with today when we speak of "the public health."

An enlightened perspective is demanded if we are to meet successfully the day's tasks and are to prepare intelligently for coming challenges. *Public Health Reports*, in common with other scientific journals, deals largely with current history, with records of contemporary research, with evaluations of the present and relatively immediate past, and with an occasional probing into tomorrow.

Together with the *American Journal of Public Health*, our pages mirror many segments of the history of public health since 1878; through these pages one can follow, if he will, the growth of a great biosocial movement. But broader obligations than mere reporting rest upon a journal such as ours. It is also our task to provide continuing opportunities for critical appraisal of policies and practices and for review of the record.

This issue of *Public Health Reports* marks a serious effort to meet our obligation afresh. Regrettably, the occasion is the passing of a distinguished figure from the public health scene—Dr. Joseph Walter Mountin. His career is reviewed in the following pages by his friend and colleague, Dr. Thomas Parran, who has chosen to look upon this chronicle with a degree of historical perspective. The fact is Dr. Mountin's career spanned an era of public health, and his record is inextricably interwoven with the story of public health from the 1920's to the present. Particularly it is a significant portion of the story of the Public Health Service, for in a profound manner the man's work and his organization interacted upon one another.

We are, of course, too close to the facts to measure Dr. Mountin's contribution to public health. He was one of a company of dynamic personalities who, in actuality, changed the very life of America. Time will reveal the scope and depth of his particular influence, his vision, his basic practicality. However, it is worth reviewing now, in the spirit of Dr. Mountin, the events of these past three decades. For we are in a period of great change, moving toward a momentous synthesis of medicine and public health; and much of what we may expect is pointed to in the career of public service and in the writings of this man.

Over the years *Public Health Reports* has been privileged to publish many papers by Dr. Mountin and his co-workers. The posthumous publication in this issue of the last two papers he presented, together with Dr. Parran's article, adds to a significant chapter in the history of a vital and purposeful social movement.

THE EDITORS