

HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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Mr. Raymond B. Fosdick
The Rockefeller Foundation
49 West 49th Street
New York 20, N. Y.

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Dear Mr. Fosdick:

As you know, Dr. Gregg, Dr. Loucks and I reached San Francisco on July 27th after our journey to China. This journey had contained for me an extraordinary amount of instructive experience. You have read the report of the commission. Perhaps it is appropriate for me at this time to mention two or three of the things which made a particularly deep impression on me and which have colored my reflections since our return.

We were everywhere received with the greatest of kindness and helpfulness. I developed a high opinion of the resourcefulness of the Chinese and an agreeable sense that a large number of them are trying at considerable personal sacrifice to maintain and elevate the standards of medicine. A particular impression was made upon me by the record of the graduates of the Peking Union Medical College. I should say that there is no doubt that the product of the P.U.M.C. is one of the most important assets of medicine in China. Both doctors and nurses are in positions of leadership and many of them are effective in leadership. There were only about 375 graduate M.D.'s, but we found plenty of evidence that this small group had had an influence quite out of proportion to its size. There is a still smaller number of graduate nurses, but a similar impression of their useful influence was made. There is, of course, a grave disproportion between the needs of China for medical service and the number of doctors available. This disproportion has suggested to some individuals the advisability of training a very large number of doctors, even if this can be done only at a serious sacrifice of quality. With this conclusion I do not agree. On the one hand, I am convinced that there is much to gain by training in relatively short courses a large number of various sorts of technical assistants to doctors: midwives, laboratory technicians, X-ray technicians, sanitary inspectors, et cetera. On the other hand, I believe that the experience in China tends to show that doctors trained only as technicians are not effective for long and are not able to take the responsibility of meeting new problems and changing conditions. I have been told by my friends in the United States Army that it was the better trained doctors in the service who most successfully made the transition from the medical problems encountered in the United States to the medical problems encountered in other parts of the world. Medicine changes from year to year and from country to country. I believe that experience shows that a basic medical education enabling its recipient to understand many of the phenomena with which he deals tends to give him the capacity to meet the new problems and to acquire the new techniques necessitated by the progress of medicine and the variation of disease.

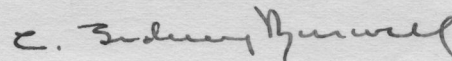
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One other aspect of our journey had a particular interest to me because of my recent experience in medical school administration. This was the fact that the P.U.M.C. differed in many ways from American medical schools, particularly in its financial relation to the community. When I first began to study the organization of the P.U.M.C. I was struck by the expense per student, but as I went further into the matter I found that there are a good many differences between China and the United States which bear on this matter of cost. Such a simple thing as good water, for example, is bought at low rates by American schools from the local community, whereas the P.U.M.C. has to have its own wells, control the purity of the water, treat it chemically, and supply all the means for its distribution to the various parts of the institution. Again for reasons that seemed good in the past and which were related to Chinese educational customs, the expense of the P.U.M.C. student has been very largely borne by the School. The tuition has been nominal; the dormitory fee paid by the student was nominal, and the student's care when ill was provided by the School. Such examples could be multiplied, but these are some of the kinds of ways in which the problems of the P.U.M.C. differ from the problems of an American school.

These differences in the financial problems and the operational problems of the schools in the two countries are not, in my opinion, the most important conclusions to be drawn from our trip. The most important conclusions seem to me to be, first, that the example and the product of the P.U.M.C. have played highly significant roles in the evolution of medicine in China, and, second, that there is reason to believe that this has been because the training given to the graduates of P.U.M.C. has been sound and basic medical education and not merely technical training.

The whole journey was a very happy and instructive experience for me. I am very grateful indeed for the opportunity to make it and to make it in such admirable company and under such pleasant auspices.

Very sincerely yours,



C. Sidney Burwell, M.D.

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