

accord this good man the respect and honor he so richly deserves. For in Dr. Prather, not only has the State of Maryland been blessed with the services of a most able administrator, but the people of this State have had the good fortune of having as their commissioner of health, a man of compassion and understanding; a man who would never permit his concern for his fellow man to become submerged in administrative detail and budgetary complexities. And his colleagues in the Department of Health have had the good fortune of being associated with a man of gentle humor and kindly manner; a man who inspires optimism with his cheerful countenance and abundant patience.

We who have had the privilege of working with him since he took over the duties of Commissioner of Health in 1956 shall miss him dearly and his decision to step down was accepted by me with extreme regret. Yet if there is anyone in public service who has earned the right to a few hours of rest and leisure, it is our good Dr. Perry Prather. I am quite confident that those who have had the benefit of sharing his knowledge, his experiences and his teachings will continue to administer the affairs of the Department of Health in the same quite, efficient and competent manner as did he.

I suppose it would be foolhardy for me or for anyone to undertake the listing of just some of the outstanding public health events and accomplishments that took place in Maryland during the administration of Dr. Prather. As many of you no doubt have noticed, a number of these achievements are listed on the back of the program for tonight's banquet, while others are woven into the very moving biography of Dr. Prather on page two of the program.

In addition to demonstrating an acute awareness of the problems of the less fortunate citizens within our communities, these achievements clearly show that Dr. Prather pioneered the extension of health services into new fields while consolidating the gains of his two predecessors. He could, for example, cope quite effectively with the emerging and serious problem of radiation control and the establishment of a radiation control surveillance network while at the same time meet head-on the long-standing problem of providing adequate housing regulations to protect agricultural migrant workers. While others, in quite lofty terms, might discuss the merits and demerits of certain major medical programs, Dr. Prather concerned himself with providing adequate dental care for the mentally retarded and handicapped children. Dr. Prather did not only interpret his duties as Commissioner of Health through programs and projects, he performed his duties always with a clear understanding of people and their needs.