

PLAIN TALK

(Originally published June 1963)

We like a man who speaks his mind. Last month Dr. Cyril Floyd, County Health Officer in neighboring Alabama's Russell County, aired some plain views on a proposal by Rev. Munday, head of the Russell County Mental Health Association. It was advocated that a local appropriation of \$2500 each from Phenix City and Russell County be matched by \$5000 from the State Health Department to provide \$10,000 with which to hire a full time psychiatric social worker. The worker's job would be "to screen and assist persons under supervision of the East Alabama Mental Health Clinic at Opelika."

In opposing bureaucracy, the ministry, and the mental health lobby in one statement, Dr. Floyd's brave stand might be compared to that of the atheist denouncing Motherhood, Jesus and the Bible at a revival meeting. Dr. Floyd, asked for an opinion, took a dim view of the proposal as premature, ill planned, ineffective and wasteful of taxpayers' money. He outlined his views in a lengthy ten-point written answer. His second point contained the statement, "The establishment of such an office would add absolutely nothing to the treatment of the mentally ill in Russell County."

After questioning the efficacy of the various methods of handling mental cases, Dr. Floyd observed also, "The office in Opelika has the services of a qualified psychiatrist on a very limited part-time basis. At last report, one half day a week costs a minimum of \$600 a month. An obvious overpayment for the limited services rendered." He felt that an additional nurse, trained in handling mental case follow up, could perform the planned duties within the framework of existing public health facilities at a small fraction of the cost.

Dr. Floyd has apparently associated with psychiatrists and psychiatric social workers before, as he bolstered his stand by stating that his opinion was "based on close work with psychiatric personnel over an extended period of time in the Army both during peace and war." In concluding, he belligerently threw down the gauntlet with, "In case the position is taken that this is a biased report, I can only cite the fact that I know what I am talking about from personal knowledge, and not merely hearsay rumors, and that this is my opinion and rendered as such only after being asked to do so."