



# **The Gentle Legions: National Voluntary Health Organizations in America (Philanthropy and Society)**

*Richard Carter*

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National voluntary health organizations are popularly viewed as charities and are not inclined to debate this designation since this accounts for much of their success. But as Richard Carter brilliantly demonstrates, the combination of health and charity also provides the basis for difficulties. Most Americans have a high opinion of health maintenance and a lesser opinion of charity. They are unlikely to be comfortable linking one with the other.

*The Gentle Legions* is a candid and illuminating analysis of the big, voluntary health organizations that have dominated in the second half of the century. Since the original publication of this book thirty years ago, some new groups have arisen and some old ones have collapsed. What has remained constant is a high participation of volunteers to such causes. Carter discusses how big philanthropies function, their goals in the fund-raising campaigns, and the projects that have resulted in both miraculous discoveries and disastrous failures.

A new introduction brings Carter's story up to date, and provides background for a work that remains unsurpassed in clarity of expression and intellectual scope. *The Gentle Legions* is a thought-provoking study of the sociology, economics, and ethics of modern medical charity.

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