Foreword

CARMEN HOOKER ODOM, *President, Milbank Memorial Fund*

SAMUEL L. MILBANK, *Chairman, Milbank Memorial Fund*

The Milbank Memorial Fund is an endowed operating foundation that works to improve health by helping decision makers in the public and private sectors acquire and use the best available evidence to inform policy for health care and population health. The Fund has engaged in nonpartisan analysis, study, research, and communication since its inception in 1905.

House on Fire: The Fight to Eradicate Smallpox, by William H. Foege, is the twenty-first book in the series California/Milbank Books on Health and the Public. The publishing partnership between the Fund and the University of California Press encourages the synthesis and communication of findings from research and experience that could contribute to more effective health policy.

With an insider's knowledge of the worldwide smallpox eradication program in the 1960s and 1970s, Foege, a physician, relates the strategies used to eradicate smallpox in Africa and India and the challenges

encountered along the way. He reveals the reasons behind the success of this program: a shared global objective; conception, implementation, and management of a clear plan tailored to a specific disease in terms of its context, range, and vulnerabilities; evaluation of the tools and techniques used and their subsequent modification; a willingness at all levels, from the local citizenry and government to country officials and global institutions, to communicate and work together to achieve the end goal; tenacity; and optimism.

As Foege notes, the smallpox eradication program shows that “humanity does not have to live in a world of plagues, disastrous governments, conflict, and uncontrolled health risks. The coordinated action of a group of dedicated people can plan for and bring about a better future. The fact of smallpox eradication remains a constant reminder that we should settle for nothing less.”

This book should be useful to policymakers, foundations, and non-governmental service organizations as well as to professionals in global health as they work together to confront the shared global risk of emerging and reemerging infectious diseases.