

rapidly during the last four years as a responsive reaction among physicians to what they consider unjustified attacks.

Dividing the profession into groups of surgeons, internists, obstetricians, gynecologists, urologists, ophthalmologists, otologists, radiologists, pathologists is valuable for intensive scientific discussions and the results which may grow from them, but splitting the profession perpendicularly along the lines of creed or race or socio-political ideologies and developing rivalries and exaggerated desires for special privilege savors of the technics which have divided industrial workers into classes, all fighting for what they consider their proportional rights. Such tendencies are subversive of the strength and effectiveness of the great body of American medicine, which should present a solid front in all efforts to promote public service in American health.

PLATFORM OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

You are all familiar with the text of the new platform of the American Medical Association. Every word of it is objective. It denies the allegation that the association is reactionary and static and anti-social.

There is general agreement that the association is moving consistently with conservation of real verities and real values, and that projection of new objectives promises to carry American medicine as a strong influence in the administration of the health programs of our country.

The American Medical Association stands for orderly and continuous progress toward better health for every American citizen. It stands for the elimination of every influence which may be destructive of the public health. It stands for the elimination of every communicable disease. It stands for the elimination of quackery. It stands for better general understanding of personal health problems. It stands for the promotion of research into fundamental causes of disease and curative therapy. It stands for better education of all physicians, not only the undergraduate but the general practitioner who has been long in service. Its platform stands for the coordination of all governmental health functions in order to promote efficiency and eliminate duplication of effort and wasteful extrava-

gance of the people's money. It stands for the treatment of the sick in their homes by local physicians and welfare agencies—where the real individual troubles are known—and it desires as little interference by the central government as may be consistent with constructive relief of personal suffering. Its program is entirely forward-looking and it seeks to carry it on in conformity with the best traditions of an advanced democracy.

The dictators of organized medicine are the practitioners of medicine, every one of whom has a voice which will be heard when it expresses a constructive thought even though it expresses adverse criticism. Nothing short of the best public service the organization can give will content the great body of medical opinion that is represented by the American Medical Association.

In conformity with the best traditions of this organization at the first intimation of the possible involvement of the United States in a wide struggle with ruthless paganism, the American Medical Association offered all its organizational resources to the government. In the office of the association there is filed the personal history of every medical student and every physician of the United States. Here only is the recorded competence and character and availability of those who may be called to the medical defense of our country. Defense against disease is quite as important as defense against a foreign enemy. Defense against the destructive invasion of our democratic ideals is an immediate concern of all Americans. This afternoon the House of Delegates responded unanimously to the request of the government for preparedness of the American medical profession and has erected the machinery to put it into immediate operation.

The pagans are marching over the democracies of the world, destroying their religious and their civic ideals and substituting therefor the irreligious nihilism of force.

This has been so dramatically illustrated to-day that all Americans must be convinced that we have arrived at a time and at a place when the sanctity of our national life is threatened, and if we cherish it we must fight for it with all our strength.

WORK OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

REPRESENTATIVES of the organized medical profession, elected by state and territorial medical associations, heard reports of activities during the past year from officers and trustees as the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association opened its annual session at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York.

There are 174 delegates in the house, including be-

sides the direct representatives of the constituent state societies, one for each of the scientific sections of the association and one each for the U. S. Army, the U. S. Navy and the U. S. Public Health Service.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Dr. Olin West, Chicago, secretary of the association,

reported that the number of enrolled members as of March 1, 1940 was 115,381, a gain of more than 3,000 since March 1, 1939.

The interest of the public in medicine and its practice and in the work of the agencies of the profession has grown tremendously, Dr. West told the delegates. This development is attested by numerous signs. Officers of medical societies are constantly asked to provide speakers for public audiences, which are increasing in size. Medical subjects and medical affairs are widely discussed in the public press, and radio stations readily make available their facilities for public discussion of medical subjects. Teachers are studying and encouraging pupils to study hygiene and to apply established principles of disease prevention. Finally, Dr. West reported, tens of thousands of inquiries from individual laymen are received each year in the offices of the American Medical Association and thousands more in the offices of state and county medical societies.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

The trustees reviewed the numerous activities of the association, including its publications, library, the directory of physicians, the cooperative advertising bureau by which advertising is obtained for state medical journals on a cooperative basis. Conferences have been held with numerous hospital and other medical organizations for the promotion of cooperation in various fields. A national conference on nomenclature of disease was sponsored by the association to discuss problems of disease classification.

A summary of the various steps in the developments concerning the indictment brought against the association and others by the U. S. Department of Justice December 20, 1938, was included in the report. Although on July 26, 1939, the United States District Court for the District of Columbia dismissed the indictment, the government, after an unsuccessful attempt to have the case removed to the Supreme Court without a hearing in the court of appeals, obtained a decision on March 4, in the Court of Appeals of the District of Columbia, reversing the decision of the District Court.

"In accordance with instructions given by the House of Delegates to the Board of Trustees, it is the purpose of the board to exhaust all possible effort to defend the American Medical Association against the indictment and to secure complete acquittal under the charges accusing the American Medical Association and others of conspiracy and violation of the federal anti-trust laws."

ASSOCIATION'S WORK ON FOOD, DRUGS AND PHYSICAL THERAPY

For thirty-five years the American Medical Association has had a Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry

keeping a watchful eye on the purity and safety of drugs. This council, like others in the organization, is made up of physicians busy with practice and teaching who without remuneration devote large amounts of their time to this exacting work. Two members have served continuously since the creation of the council in 1905.

In these thirty-five years the council's work, at first largely concerned with the investigation and exposure of unwarranted claims for drugs, has materially changed.

"There still exists, however, a tendency on the part of some manufacturers of proprietary products to make overenthusiastic claims for their products, to promote complex mixtures of well-known drugs under fanciful names, to exploit unessential modifications of established drugs and to promote the sale and use of products intended for therapeutic purposes before scientific evidence of therapeutic value has been established."

Sulfanilamide has attracted more attention within the last few years than any other product, the council said. It has been necessary to issue three revisions of the original statement on the action, dosage and uses of this drug, so fast has been the advancement of knowledge developed through scientific investigations. This particular study was made with the cooperation of a hundred investigators.

Other subjects of investigation by the council in the past year included hormone treatment, the status of vitamins, local anesthetics, manganese compounds for use in skin diseases, bismuth preparations and other products submitted by manufacturers for study.

A well-equipped chemical laboratory is maintained at the headquarters of the association in Chicago. The laboratory examines new products submitted to the council and is constantly re-examining previously accepted products to aid in maintaining standards. During the past year much attention was devoted to sulfanilamide and sulfapyridine. A new product called sobisminol, used in the treatment of syphilis, was the subject of intensive study. Another interesting investigation was the use of sodium citrate and sodium chloride for the preservation of blood in "banks."

COUNCIL ON PHYSICAL THERAPY

The Council on Physical Therapy, which deals with apparatus used in the application of physical agents to the treatment of disease, has been engaged for several years in investigations of hearing aids and audiometers, the machines by which ear specialists can measure loss of hearing.

This council reports that the new vacuum tube hearing aids are now being perfected to a high degree through the application of radio engineering prin-

ciples. The weight of these appliances, heretofore an obstacle to general use, is gradually being reduced to make them wearable. It is too early yet to determine the efficiency of these devices, their upkeep or their ability to stand up under exacting requirements.

One of the problems that concerns the council on physical therapy is the interference with radio reception caused by apparatus operated by electricity in hospitals and physicians' offices. Two possible methods of dealing with this knotty problem are under consideration: one is the screening of treatment rooms to avoid interference with the air waves and the other is a proposal to reserve a definite frequency band in the electromagnetic spectrum for medical apparatus.

Claims made for the virtues of sun lamps have been under the council's scrutiny. "Under the council's requirements, therapeutic claims made for sun lamps are restricted to the extent that it may be claimed that these lamps may prevent rickets, may aid in promoting the soundness of bones and teeth and play an important part in the deposition of calcium. Claims for the prevention and cure of colds, for the building up of resistance and for the prevention of respiratory diseases are not accepted for the reason that satisfactory clinical evidence to substantiate such claims has not been submitted," it was announced.

COUNCIL OF FOODS STUDIES PRINCIPLES OF NUTRITION

The Council on Foods attempts to encourage the application of scientific knowledge in the manufacture of food products and research in the field of nutrition while it tries to discourage unwarranted claims for advertising and promotions of manufactured foods, according to the report.

An official compendium of the council's work has recently been published, in which claims that may properly be made for a food product are set forth. The discussion concerns the estimated daily requirement for each of the dietary essentials and the proportions to be found in certain foods, the frequency with which an item of food may reasonably appear in the average diet, and availability from the point of view of cost and the ease with which any given dietary essential is obtainable.

It is believed that from the principles set forth in the book a manufacturer or other interested person can determine for himself what claims may legitimately be made for any food product.

As a result of an exhaustive study, the council approved the addition of vitamins, minerals or other essential elements to foods to bring them up to high natural levels. It definitely opposed, however, "indiscriminate fortification" of general foods to the point that the total content was larger than that in any natural food of its class.

OFFICIAL ATTENTION TO INDUSTRIAL MEDICINE

The growing importance of industrial medicine as a part of medical practice was reflected in the establishment of a council on industrial health three years ago. The council reported to the delegates that it has helped organize committees on industrial health in thirty-four state medical associations, has established contact with manufacturing, trade and labor associations, is studying nomenclature in occupational diseases and is looking into the "exceedingly complex field of medical relations under workmen's compensation administration."

Groundwork for improvement of the status of the industrial physician as an ethical practitioner has been laid. It is believed that this status "can be reached most rapidly through the establishment of standards of conduct somewhat specific in character which would have the effect of defining and clarifying all relationships between the physician in industry and the employer, the employee and his fellow physicians."

BUREAU OF LEGAL MEDICINE AND LEGISLATION

The bureau of legal medicine and legislation reported that Connecticut, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania and Vermont enacted laws in 1939 authorizing the formation of non-profit corporations to operate medical service plans on a prepayment basis. Fourteen more states passed laws authorizing hospital plans on a prepayment basis.

Laws requiring persons applying for marriage licenses to present certificates of freedom from venereal disease were enacted in California, Colorado, Indiana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee and West Virginia.

Sale or distribution of sulfanilamide was restricted to prescriptions of licensed physicians, dentists and veterinarians in eight states.

The bureau also reviewed federal legislation in the health and hospital field, pointing out that no action had been taken on the Wagner Health Bill since it was reported out of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor last summer with approval of the general objectives, but without commitment on its framework and detailed provisions.

The report criticized the bill introduced last winter to appropriate funds for small hospitals in rural areas as "indefinite with respect to important details, an indefiniteness that does not seem to be justified by the proposals submitted by President Roosevelt in his special message. It does not, for example, definitely limit the building of hospitals to areas that are financially unable to construct needed hospital facilities. It leaves unanswered the question as to the extent to

which such hospitals are to engage in public health activities."

MEDICAL ECONOMICS

Fourteen state medical societies have experimental medical service plans in various stages of development, the bureau of medical economics reported. In some states special laws were passed to make these possible, but in others the plans proposed were considered permissible under existing statutes.

The state plans have grown out of a large number of experiments conducted by county medical societies during the period 1932 to 1938. "Never have so many, so varied or so significant projects pertaining to the distribution of medical care been developed and carried on in any country," said the report. "When several years ago the burden of medical care for the indigent disrupted the systems of county and township physicians, drained the resources of philanthropic organizations and became too heavy for physicians in private practice to bear, the various state and county medical societies developed almost the only equitable plans for efficiently distributing such resources as are available to provide medical care for the indigent."

All these temporary plans and all those now in operation should be considered frankly experimental. "If they are not found appropriate or desirable, they should be abandoned or modified," it continued. "The medical societies which abandon such experiments stand to lose the time and money expended, but under such circumstances no political, financial or occupational vested interests are created and left behind to hamper further experiments or developments."

The state medical societies have themselves provided, through appropriations from their funds and the gratuitous services of their officers or committees for the preliminary expenses of the new medical service plans.

PATENT MEDICINES, CHARLATANS AND FRAUDS

The bureau of investigation, which has exposed frauds and charlatans for many years, continues to dispense information about a wide variety of subjects to physicians, students, government agencies, newspapers, magazines, radio stations and the general public.

Most frequent subjects of inquiry included "cures" for epilepsy and cancer, nostrums advertised for relief of asthma, cosmetics, "advertising doctors," food products for which medicinal claims are made, coal tar drugs and electrical contrivances.

SHOULD MEDICAL ETHICS BE CHANGED?

Medicine's methods of practice may change, its economics may change, its science may change, but its

principles of ethics do not change any more than the basic principles of the Christian religion, the judicial council of the association declared in declining to revamp the principles of medical ethics.

For several years there has been a growing desire on the part of some physicians to have the principles of medical ethics revised to make them more liberal, specific and explanatory and by excepting physicians from the application of some features or to abandon the principles of medical ethics as being behind the times or outmoded.

These advocates of change have forgotten or do not realize, the council declared, that the principles are a statement of underlying principles of conduct which apply to the relations of every physician to his patients, with the public and with his fellow doctors of medicine.

Many of those seeking information concerning ethical problems "have not been trying to be ethical, but have been seeking to discover by some means, such as sophisticated reasoning of hair-splitting verbiage, how far from ethical principles they can go and still be considered ethical."

The council believes that the principles of medical ethics, as set down at present, can be improved in wording and arrangement, but it also believes that the present is not the time to do the rewriting. The report concludes: "There is at present so much turmoil in medical organization and its relation to government that it seems wise to let the muddied waters settle before any consideration is given to so fundamental a feature of our organization as our principles of medical ethics."

FROM THE FIELD OF MEDICAL EDUCATION

Medical schools will hereafter have to require three years of premedical education of its students if they wish to remain on the list of accredited medical colleges. This action was taken at a meeting of the council on medical education on December 10, 1939.

The council is now working extensively in the field of graduate education for physicians, in cooperation with the special examining boards that have been set up in recent years for examination and certification of specialists. Just now these groups are studying opportunities for hospital training that will help prepare young physicians to take the examinations of the various boards. A recent study begun by the council concerns the health of interns, with a special interest in finding how many develop tuberculosis.

The annual registration of approved hospitals, made by the council, showed 6,226 institutions with a bed capacity of 1,195,026 and 58,764 bassinets and an average daily occupancy of 996,483.