

EDITORIAL

The Past is the Key to the Future

It was not so many years ago that entry into the profession of optometry was a relatively simple and easy procedure. The candidates more often than not were the relatives of practising optometrists or the part-time employees of dispensing opticians and optical supply houses, or at least relatives of the owners of these businesses. A few of the entrants were patients of optometrists or those few students successfully recruited by guidance counsellors.

By and large however, by virtue of their large number of family and personal contacts, these candidates were usually well-acquainted with the history of optometry. They were sensitive and committed to the reversal of optometry's status at the time as second class citizenry vis a vis health planners, government officials, politicians, public health nurses, ophthalmologists and other medically trained and oriented individuals. Students entering optometry knew beforehand that they would have to battle to gain their rightful place in society.

With the advent of university integration and the granting of a university doctorate degree, the informal and relatively easy access suddenly changed and a very competitive and formal university admission system became the rule. It must be emphasized that the admission requirements to the College of Optometry of Ontario were similar to those in force in Ontario universities in 1967, namely high school graduation with a minimum grade level and certain required subjects.

But because of the high prestige and greater visibility associated with the university course, applications became a flood. Subject to standard university requirements for limited enrollment programs, the applicants with the highest grades were the fortunate few. However, high grades did not necessarily ensure an aware-

ness of the history and heritage of optometry, nor did they guarantee any sensitivity to the broader responsibilities involved in becoming a successful practising clinical optometrist.

It has been this editor's observation that graduates of the seventies appear to lack a knowledge of our history and heritage, a knowledge essential to the fostering of an "esprit de corps" which led the profession to its many recent successes in the academic, professional and political arenas. In short, more recent graduates have had little battling to do in order to establish themselves. Relative to the experience of others before them, the profession of optometry has been served to these graduates on a "silver platter."

Because of their lack of purview, the '70s' graduates do not appreciate the efforts, the tears and the heart-breaks which occurred in order to present them with such a favourable social and economic situation. Are they prepared to put a shoulder to the wheel, to learn the ropes so as to assure replacement of the "old guard" which is reaching the age of retirement?

If concerned optometrists read nothing more than the several C.A.O. and provincial reports published herein under the general heading "The Seventies in Review" they will at least acquire a rudimentary concept of the nature and extent of the difficulties confronting the profession. Hopefully they will be inspired to activity and convinced participation.

Not too many months ago, the novel "Roots" created social and emotional upheaval as people realized the value of being aware of their origins. We hope that we can inspire a similar upsurge and revival within the ranks of optometry. With this foremost in our thoughts we append a list of historical readings about optome-

try, its heritage and its history. If such readings do not stir pride in an optometrist what hope can there remain for our survival as a unified profession?

1. Charlemagne Bourcier – D'un Oeil à l'Autre – Editions Beauchemin Montreal 1943.
2. Wilbur M. Brucker – The Story of Optometry – American Optometric Association, Minneapolis 1939
3. Maurice E. Cox – Optometry, the Profession, its Antecedents, Birth and Development – Optical Journal and Review of Optometry, October 1945 to January 1947.
4. Albert J. Fitch – My Fifty Years in Optometry, Pennsylvania. College of Optometry Press
5. Edward J. Fisher – History of Optometric Education In Canada – Can. Journal of Optometry, Vol.29, No.3, December 1967.
6. Armand Messier – l'Histoire de l'Education Optometrique au Canada – Can. Journal of Optometry, Vol.29, No.3, December 1967.
7. Maxwell Miller – Optometry's Historic Contribution to Science and Medicine – Can. Journal of Optometry, Vol.26, No.4, March 1965 and Vol.27, No.1, June 1965.
8. Henry Hoffstetter – Optometry, Professional, Legal and Economic Aspects, C.V. Mosby Co., St. Louis 1948.
9. E.J. Fisher – Optometry in Canada – The First Seventy Years – Transactions of the International Ophthalmic Optical Congress, British Optical Association 1970.
10. Munroe Hirsch, Ralph Wick – The Optometric Profession, Chilton Press, Philadelphia, 1968.
11. D. A. Sheard – The Heritage of Applied Optics – Transactions of the International Ophthalmic Optical Congress, British Optical Association 1970.
12. M. H. Revell – Strabismus – A History of Orthoptic Techniques, Barrie & Jenkins in association with the British Optical Association, 1971.