

Congress Gleanings

G.M. Belanger

This 18th Biennial Congress is the third time that Vancouver and the B.C.O.A. have hosted our national Congress. Previous visits date back to 1959 and 1971. (That 1959 meeting, at which Harold Coape-Arnold took office, witnessed C.A.O.'s first steps in the preparation of Optometry's briefs to the Hall Royal Commission on Health Services, whose report appeared in 1964).

Grag Walsh, former C.A.O. Executive Director, 1969 - 1972, as suave and beau brummel as ever, renewed acquaintances with optometrists from across the nation. Greg is now a successful criminal lawyer with one of the larger legal firms in Vancouver.

Harry Perrin, C.A.O. President 1949 - 1951, and still a resident of Vancouver, ambled by to say hello. It's unfortunate that he is so little known to so many of the recent, and less recent, graduates. Here was a golden opportunity to meet with, and learn about, a significant segment of Canadian optometric history. (Two more former Presidents, Fred Nuttal, 1946 - 48; and Cliff Palmer, 1955 - 57 are now retired and live quietly in Lethbridge, both fountains of information on optometric history.)

Newfoundland set an outside-the-province attendance record. 37% of its members attended. Had other provinces equalled this percentage, the hotel could not have accommodated them all.

In chronological order, here are the several past-Presidents who attended this Congress:

Bill Lyle, 1957; Ed Rea, 1967; Hugh Mackenzie, 1969; Ivan McNabb, 1975; Garson Lecker, 1977; Roy Brown, 1978; Jack Huber, 1979; Hervé Landry, 1980 and Reid MacDuff, 1981.



Most of North American Optometry is represented in this picture. With a majestic mountain panorama behind them, C.A.O. President Dr. Roland des Groseilliers and his

wife, Margaret, host A.O.A. President Dr. Timothy Kime (r) and his wife, Barbara (second from right) at a pre-banquet cocktail reception.

There were also several past recipients of the President's Award present: Maurice Belanger, 1967; Fred Attridge, 1969; Ted Fisher, 1971; Clair Bobier, 1975; Bill Lyle, 1979 and Emerson Woodruff, this year's winner.

Although C.A.O. Congresses are essentially national in nature, they are assuming more and more an international flavour. Some foreign colleagues who were in attendance: Dr. Timothy Kime, President of the A.O.A.; Dr. John Wilson, President

of the New Zealand Optometric Association; Dr. Sol Rattes, Perth, Australia; Dr. John Elliott, Brisbane, Australia; Dr. Vince Taylor, Pretoria, South Africa.

The Dean of the Pacific University School of Optometry, manning a booth in the hopes of recruiting Western students unable to find a place at Waterloo, was also present.

During Professor Long's report on activities at the School of Optometry, University of Waterloo, a quiet voice from the audience asked why one-



One of the highlights of this year's education sessions was a panel on Low Vision Services in Canada, which featured (l-r) Dr. Ian Bailey, University of California at Berkeley; Dr.

Johanne Murphy, Institut Nazareth et Louis Braille, Longueuil, Quebec; Dr. John Jantzi, Surrey, B.C. and Dr. George Woo, School of Optometry, University of Waterloo.

half the enrollment at Waterloo is female. Professor Long's even quieter answer, "My charm", brought down the roof. A final commentary from another voice credited Claude Beaulne in Montreal with even greater charm, since 2/3 of the students in Montreal are female.

Gérard Lambert, the new Executive Director for C.A.O., and his good spouse Monique, made the rounds to get acquainted with as many practitioners as possible. Gérard and Monique are natives of St. Boniface, Manitoba, and are both bilingual. Gérard is a former Administrative Director of l'Association des Optométristes du Québec, and his experience will stand him well in his new position.

It is unfortunate that so few colleagues from Quebec were in attendance for all parties could stand to gain much from the activities in Quebec. Dr. Jean-Marie Rodrigue, the A.O.Q. President, was in attendance, as well as the Registrar and President of l'Ordre des Optométristes du Québec, and each contributed importantly to business sessions, the former to the Interaction '83 sessions, and the latter to the national board. It is a pity that no representatives from the School of Optometry, University of Montreal attended.

The editor took advantage of the spectacular west coast scenery to put to good use the binoculars given as a gift by his Ottawa colleagues on the occasion of his 25th anniversary as C.J.O. Editor.

Not to be outdone by Joe Clark, our own national President went him one better and left *two* valises of family clothes at the Bayshore Hotel after checking out. As a result, Mike DiCola was able to add another qualification to his growing resumé — that of baggage agent.

Brian Cox had to regularly interrupt and retrieve his good wife from the persistent historical enquiries of the editor.

Wise words from Bill Lyle, who claims that a drug which has no side



C.A.O. Council hardly shows the wear of five solid days of business sessions just prior to the President's banquet. Seated l - r: Dr. Bruce Rosner, Secretary-Treasurer (Manitoba); Dr. Ralph Rosere, President-elect (Nova Scotia); Dr. Roland des Groseilliers, President (Ontario); Dr. Reid MacDuff, past-President (Newfoundland); Mr. Don Schaefer, Execu-

tive Director. Standing l - r: Dr. Robert Bell (New Brunswick); Dr. James Patriquin (Newfoundland); Dr. Rainer Zenner (Prince Edward Island); Dr. Rix Graham (British Columbia); Dr. Barry Winter (Ontario); Dr. James Krueger (Saskatchewan); Mr. Gerard Lambert, Executive Director (eff. October 1) and Dr. Scott Brisbin (Alberta).

effects indicates either that the drug is too recently on the market, or the speaker knows little about that particular drug.

Len Koltun ran around distributing hats and buttons promoting the City of Regina as the 1985 locale for our 19th Biennial Congress. Pity the poor horse who would have the rider as pictured on the button deposited in the saddle.

With so many optometrists of the female gender, the "Ladies" Programme has now gone the way of the dodo and yielded to the term "Spouses" Programme. Congress organizers will undoubtedly have many headaches ahead as they seek to create a programme which will suit equally the male and female tastes.

The organizers are to be congratulated for having the moral fortitude



Following an emotional thank you, Dr. Emerson Woodruff (l) accepted the 1983

C.A.O. President's Award, presented by past-President Dr. Reid MacDuff.

to ask a divine blessing prior to sitting down to the two main meals offered. In offering grace, both Ted Fisher and Norm Armstrong produced such gems that both are recorded here for posterity, and with the hope that the practice continues.

Ted Fisher: God increase our hyperopia so that we may take a long-range view of our professional problems and work together toward their solutions. God correct our astigmatism so that we may not have an erroneous or distorted view of optometry's place in Society. And Lord reduce our myopia so that we may look out from our daily round of activities and see the plight of many of our fellow humans around the world.

God give us the vision to do our part to help those who know only hardship, hunger and disease. Help us to help them and bless this bounteous meal that we may be enabled to serve others. Amen.

Norm Armstrong:

Almighty God in Whom we move and have our being, we ask your blessing on this company of colleagues and guests. We give thanks for the leadership we enjoy. We ask your blessing on those chosen to lead, and seek new avenues to serve. Bless the food in which we are about to partake, and may those who prepare and serve it be also blessed.

This prayer we ask in your confidence. Amen.

It would be a serious oversight not to mention our exhibitors, whose presence enhances the success of our Congresses. The system of scheduling no conflicting activities, so as to



President des Groseilliers (I) presents a plaque to outgoing Executive Director Don Schaefer, who leaves October 1 to assume the position of

the I.O.O.L.'s first International Director, based in London, England.

provide an opportunity to visit the booths and talk with the exhibitors is to be encouraged. Such an arrangement is the least we can do to do justice to those whose financial support makes the Congress viable.

For some statistics:

Attendance:

Members	Spouses	Children
281	156	69

The importance and popularity of contact lenses is manifested in the number of firms in attendance. Optometrists, however, should not neglect ophthalmic lenses in their prescribing habits. Contact lenses are too limited in their treatment characteristics to be applicable to the totality of vision problems.

It was a treat to note the number of Canadian practitioners on the Education Programme, particularly Dr. Johanne Murphy, of the Institut Nazareth et Louis Braille in Longueuil, Quebec.

It was a pleasure to hear A.O.Q. President Rodrique discuss recent accomplishments in Quebec. His dynamism reflects an attitude that is needed to confront our many problems.

Discrete enquiries of a number of

exhibitors indicate that at least those few were pleased with the number of visitors to their booths. The setting of specific times for visiting the exhibits seems to be the key to this expressed satisfaction. The fact that this was a national Congress may have had some effect on the interest shown by practitioners in the exhibits.

The President sported his chain and medal of office, designed in 1975 for Ivan McNabb by Bonnie Edworthy of Calgary. It gets lighter each year as the engraving shaves off a few more milligrams of the medallion.

Comments from several members lean towards returning the formal banquet to the more traditional format used in the past.

Council looked very sedate as they posed for a group picture just prior to the banquet — understandable when you consider it was Day 5 of the business schedule for them.

Not being a specialist in protocol, this writer cannot say that we pulled a boner by overlooking a toast to the Queen, but it was a delight to hear Norm Armstrong toast Canada, and to hear the assembly sing the National Anthem with Ted Fisher at the piano.

Of the many occasions attended by this writer at which the President's Award was presented, all but one of the winners have been overcome by emotion, and this has shown in their acceptance speeches. Emerson was not this exception. The award was well-merited and yet hardly on a par with his contribution to Optometry.

A.O.A. President, Tim Kime, in addressing the business session, stressed the similarity of problems facing Canadian and U.S. optometry:

- the proliferation of commercial chains.
- relaxation of bans on advertising; consumerism and the F.D.A.
- ophthalmic opposition.
- internal divisions.

His theme as President is "Control your own destiny. Optometry is neither dead nor dying. Avoid over-reacting so as not to become part of the problem."

To achieve this, he proposes attention to a number of factors:

- the independent O.D., not the chains.
- re-integrating the city centres.
- student recruitment and placement; conveying to the graduates the need for a professional practice.
- getting patients into our offices by better service.
- the need for interprofessional communications.
- Government relations; federal and state drug laws; F.D.A. pronouncements.
- organizational optometry; viewing your association as a partner, not a competitor.
- the need to develop professional leadership.
- practice enhancement.
- militant medicine.
- optometric education.
- general and in-office public information.

John Wilson informed the assembly on aspects of New Zealand optometry:

- registration since 1928.
- non-use of drugs in refraction.
- elimination of company trading.
- new Act in process covers optometrists and dispensers.

— Auckland University grants a B.Sc. degree and graduates 12 per year.

— problems with M.D.'s re school children.

He concluded by extending an invitation to Canadians to attend their Congress in October, 1984.

Ramblings of an Observer

The success of any national Congress depends upon several factors which must include a well-balanced educational programme and a business programme which will not only interest practitioners but entice them to attend. But, in truth, are there enough to draw people from all areas of Canada to attend? Are the professional and technical aspects alone sufficient in themselves? Could it be that the city chosen, its geographical location, its natural beauties, its historical and political backgrounds, not to mention available social and cultural amenities, outweigh the lectures and speakers? Could not the yen for travel be a significant factor in boosting attendance?

The best of lecturers and choice of subjects, and well-run business meetings do not seem to be the whole answer. As the attractiveness of the city chosen decreases, the educational aspect must be enhanced.

The recent Congress can be hailed as a successful event, not only for the members registered, but also for attendance at lectures and at business sessions, as well as for time spent in the exhibit hall. Of the 14 Congresses, out of 18, that this observer has attended, the business sessions were about the best run and attended. The exhibitors were ecstatic at the attention they got from the registrants, and they felt the time was well-spent.

Organizing the educational program is becoming the most difficult part of the Congress. Every year, speakers of note must be booked months ahead, most of them being constantly on speaking tours. Their repeated appearances on different podiums means, all too often, a repeat of the same lectures for lack of

time to continue their research between invitations.

This is no reflection on the competence of the speakers, or on the efforts of the Congress organizers to offer an attractive program. Rather, it is a reflection on the too-great popularity of some topics and some speakers. And this cannot be avoided, because of the proliferation of Congresses, seminars and conventions. One optometrist admitted hearing the same speaker giving the same lecture at three different events!

How then to resolve this problem? Top-notch, well-known speakers are not all that numerous. Can less well-known, but equally competent speakers be expected to draw the crowds? Can we not look further afield, to Europe, the British Isles, Australia, for speakers of perhaps equal ability, but not as widely known internationally?

Can organizers risk offering some more fundamental topics, instead of the headline makers, less newsworthy, but so essential to good optometric practice? Is the answer to be found in concurrent lectures on different topics, with the attendant increase in organizational costs?

It is a challenge to be met. This observer does not envy the educational committees' task of deciding on a programme capable of attracting practitioners from all areas of practice. May these few observations be of some help.

