



EDITORIAL

A Little Bit of History

Pride in one's family, city, country or profession is a healthy and very human trait. Provided that it is not tinted with arrogance and self-conceit, it can be an important factor motivating one to greater accomplishments.

Pride is rooted in history, for one cannot take pride in family, city, country or profession, unless one is fully aware of the accomplishments of those who preceded us.

Canadian optometry is the possessor of a varied and meaningful history going back to the turn of the century, in areas as diverse as education, professional organization and social responsibility. Starting in the mid twenties, optometric leaders have gradually forged a viable federation of provincial associations culminating in the granting of a federal charter to the Canadian Association of Optometrists in 1948.

However big this step forward may have been, the charter could not be fully effective until a permanent office and administration were established. This only came about in 1953 when Edward B. Higgins, M.A., was hired as the first Executive Director of C.A.O.

But we are anticipating ourselves, so let us backtrack a bit. In 1951, Mr. Higgins had been hired by the Ontario Association of Optometrists to conduct a survey of the profession in Ontario. A copy of this report had been sent to the C.A.O. Council in January, 1952. Under then-President Harry Nowlan, of Winnipeg, Council studied this report and, in a farsighted move, voted to ask Mr. Higgins to carry out a trans Canada version of his survey. He accepted.

Many weeks were spent in planning the tour, so as to coincide with as many provincial General Meetings as possible. An extensive questionnaire, covering some 29 items, was prepared and dispatched to all provincial executives for study and comment. Among the many facets being looked at were: education and its financing, the O.D. degree, health insurance, professional relations ("inter" and "intra"), internal administration, cost structure, legislation and relations with government, types of practice, economics and relations with the industry.

In the spring of 1952, Mr. Higgins embarked on his tour. It was to last a period of some 4 - 5 months,

travelling, meeting and interviewing from coast to coast. In so doing, it depleted almost to nil what little reserves a cost-conscious Council had managed to set aside to that time, the formidable sum of a little over \$4,000.00. All provinces contributed to defraying the expenses while Mr. Higgins was in each of their respective provinces.

In November, 1952, Mr. Higgins presented his 100-page report to J.J. Mulrooney, then the President of C.A.O. Council. Council members spent the next 6 months studying the document and, at its July, 1953 meeting in Montreal, voted to ask Mr. Higgins to implement his recommendations by becoming a part-time Executive Director of C.A.O. He accepted and it was agreed that his management consulting firm's office would be the locale for the C.A.O. office.

This report, entitled *A National Survey of Canadian Optometry*, was presented in a limited edition and distributed to members of Council, the two schools (at the time in Toronto and Montreal), the Editor of the C.J.O. and some members of the Colleges of Optometry.

With the passing of years, some recipients of the report died, and their files were lost. Other copies were destroyed, in one case at a fire at the clinic building in Waterloo, or through other accidents to storage files and archives, like the flooding of C.A.O.'s basement storage in Ottawa.

Some three years ago, the Editor of the C.J.O. began a search for copies. He cannot now indicate how many letters he sent to individuals and institutions inquiring if they had a copy, or knew the whereabouts of one. The continued negative response was most discouraging and it began to seem like this cornerstone of Canadian optometric history would be forever lost to the profession.

Finally, the Editor turned to the ophthalmic industry, in the hopes that one of the optical companies would have a copy tucked away in its archives. It was much to our relief and joy when Mr. Sydney Hermant, of Imperial Optical, informed us that he had found a copy in the company archives. That copy was loaned to C.A.O. and copies of The Higgins Report are once again a part of the Association's permanent archival record.

The C.J.O. and C.A.O. would like to extend our thanks to Mr. Hermant for his efforts in uncovering a copy, and for his generosity in loaning it to the Association.

Now that it is once again available, we see what a milestone document The Higgins Report is. **We recommend it be read by present-day optometric leaders, few of whom have ever seen or even heard of it.**

Ed Higgins himself concluded, "I cannot help but have the feeling that optometry can and will do those things which are now essential to its future... It is their opportunity and their responsibility to

make a decision." Mr. Higgins' future is our present and his report makes for a fascinating study, then and now.

G.M.B.

Editor's Note: As per the old adage, It never rains but when it pours; as this issue was going to press, we received a short note from Dr. Austin Forsyth, newly appointed Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Optometric Association. Himself a prominent figure in Canadian optometric history, Dr. Forsyth had just uncovered a copy of The Higgins Report in a long unexplored section of his personal files.



LETTERS

Editor, C.J.O.

In the past year, I've had over 20 referrals from other doctors, mostly optometrists, but also chiropractors, M.D.'s and even an ophthalmologist (Glory be!), all for Ortho-K. At the same time, I've found myself on the receiving end of more and more phone calls asking advice about the Ortho-K treatment for various patients.

All of this leads me to believe that interest in Ortho-K is increasing rapidly. What I'd like to find out is just how many practitioners are doing orthokeratology right now. Would it be possible to ask that question in the Journal? If there are enough, it might pay to consider an Ortho-K chapter of some sort — perhaps as part of the Canadian Optometric Contact Lens Society.

I believe that getting the figure on the number of optometrists practicing Ortho-K is important to Canadian optometry as a whole.

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Editor, C.J.O.

I congratulate you for so accurately identifying the issues in your editorial "A Conflict of Interest..." (C.J.O., June, 1983). In a few paragraphs, you have exposed the medical argument for what it is — a non-sequitur. I think that a corollary of your own argument is apparent. It is that, surely, professionalism in any sphere of health care is not related to

whether or not one is involved in the treatment of one's own diagnosis. It depends, rather, on the integrity and expertise one brings to that treatment and diagnosis.

R.B. Perkins, O.D.
Wardsville, Ontario



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