

EDITORIAL

OUR SOCIETY IN TRANSITION A STATEMENT OF POLICY

EVERY member of our Society is aware of the phenomenal growth in our membership to 5,251 as of June, 1956. This growth is the result of a broadening interest in anesthesiology and the hard work, unselfish devotion, sage guidance and self-sacrificing application of farsighted leaders, many of whom have been lost to us by death or retirement. Much remains to be accomplished by those accepting a continuing responsibility. The task includes maintenance of a major nation-wide operation with evergrowing demands being put on our already large budget. The welfare of a large and growing membership must be fostered, but far more important is the responsibility of all of us to work for the improvement of care of patients to be anesthetized.

The persistent influence of a few profit-seeking institutions constantly poses a threat to the principles vital in providing the best possible service to our patients. The sword of Damocles hangs low over our heads when our code of ethics is infringed upon because of influences outside our control. Sometimes, unfortunately, individual members, not sufficiently alert to the hazards, condone encroachments and submit to conditions of practice that may be interpreted as unethical or even illegal in some states. Many of our newly trained colleagues are being invited to initiate the practice of anesthesiology in localities where previously it was never offered. The eager and enthusiastic young anesthesiologist, anxious to live in his chosen community, imbued with the ideal of service but only dimly aware of the broad implications of the principles for which we stand, turns for advice to one of his medical colleagues who likewise has little knowledge of the problems and hazards involved. The thinking of the medical fraternity in his new locality may be circumscribed by traditions and influences, fostered by the hospital and the community, that are totally out of step with present day concepts for unfettered progress toward excellent care for all. A young anesthesiologist in the process of selecting a new location is warned that new circumstances constantly require careful study and interpretation to determine the presence of trends that could ultimately be harmful to the best interests of patients.

To correlate thinking and to define clearly the proper modes of practice of anesthesiology, it is my intention to create a Committee for Clarification of Ethics. Its duty will be to codify our principles of professional conduct. In the past, these principles have been stated

Dr. Irving Fallin, the new President of the American Society of Anesthesiologists, was invited to outline his aims and objectives for our Society during his term of office.—*Editor*.

in general terms. Now, let us understand them exactly and thus be in a position to advise young colleagues who turn to us for guidance. To bridge the gap between the traditions of the past and the problems of our future I am, in addition, advocating the formation of a Committee of Consultants consisting of senior members of our Society whose duty it will be to apply a steadying influence and offer wise counsel, gained by experience, to our leaders of the future. This committee will be entrusted with the responsibility of ascertaining ways and means of helping anesthesiologists whenever the need may arise. Its prime responsibility will be to establish a clearing house for advice and assistance to those in the process of organizing departments of anesthesiology.

I pledge myself to maintain our Society's high ethical standards, to seek solution of every problem as quickly and as earnestly as I am able. It is my aim to leave the office of President in a condition favorable to the continuing successful expansion of our specialty in the years to come. I humbly ask each member to ponder the fact that ours is a truly democratic organization, whose success depends on the contribution of each member. Only by the wholehearted continuing cooperation of all can we succeed in the transition of our Society from a small organization to a big and appropriately influential one.

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American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.