

Correspondence

Economy

To the Editor: This is a comment on Leslie Rendell-Baker's editorial in the January-February number of ANESTHESIOLOGY. "On the Promise of Economy Denied" may have been written from the point of view of something other than just economy, but if it is really economy in which one is interested, it can be obtained by methods described by Foldes

et al., *Annals of Surgery* 136: 978, 1952 or Weaver *et al.*, *ANESTHESIOLOGY* 16, 57, 1955. No change of equipment is really required.

ROBERT W. VIRTUE, M.D.
Professor of Anesthesiology
University of Colorado
Medical Center
Denver, Colorado

Scientific Functions of Editorial Commentary: A Dissent

To the Editor: The significance of an important article published in a professional or scientific journal commonly is underscored by a covering editorial in the same issue. Some journals even utilize the editorial platform to call the attention of their readers to significant articles recently published in other periodicals. Whether the commentary is written by a member of the editorial board or by an invited contributor is immaterial: an aura of authority is conferred by its presence on the editorial pages, which then serves to heighten the impact on the readers of the work reported. Clearly useful, the practice should be continued, although perhaps not as often as in ANESTHESIOLOGY at present. (There is prestige in rarity: even a Nobel-Prize-of-the-Month would soon lose its luster.)

In a diametrically opposite variant of this approach, publication of a controversial article, on a matter deemed inadequately proven but too important to ignore, is balanced by the accompaniment of an editorial verbalizing the dilemma of the editors. An example of such pairing, on the subject of possible nephrotoxicity after methoxyflurane, appeared in the September-October 1966 issue of ANESTHESIOLOGY. Here indeed was courageous discharge of editorial responsibility.

A hybrid synthesis of the above opposites, however, has become a sporadically recurring

theme in ANESTHESIOLOGY. Examples appeared in May-June 1965 on the uptake of ethylene in man, in November-December 1965 on pulmonary compliance in anesthetized man, in March-April 1966 on species differences and computers, and in January-February 1968 concerning experimental results with cyclopropane and halothane on cardiovascular responses. (The last-named lost none of its prestigious quality by being moved from the opening editorial pages to a new location at the crossroads of the journal.) In each case, the invited commentary praised not, but instead itemized the flaws of an original article (or two) already approved for publication by the editorial board.

Here is a curious state of affairs. The writers of these editorials impugn not only the credibility of the authors but also, by inference, the wisdom of the editorial board in accepting the papers in the first place. The reader, meanwhile, finds himself in the quandary of Andy, of the classic radio program "Amos and Andy." When Amos, after a lengthy explanation of the intricacies of an insurance policy, asked "Is that clear?," Andy replied philosophically, "Oh yeah: the big print giveth, and the little print taketh away."

At this point, it would perhaps be useful to recount the processes of editorial review prior to acceptance of a manuscript submitted for