

The Canadian Royal Commission on Health Service, in its two volume report published in 1964 stated optometrists in Canada report that on the average 4.4 per cent of their patients are referred to ophthalmologists or other physicians; medical experience is that those patients who come in for refractions only almost half had an associated disease and 13 per cent had a general disease affecting their eyes.

The Canadian survey shows serious conditions of or manifested in the eye recognized by optometrists that could be detected by ophthalmologists. The medical profession's objective is to assure that the public obtain the best possible medical care and to prevent failure of referrals for needed medical treatment.

There are over 1200 eye diseases listed in the nomenclature of eye diseases which affect vision. This amendment compels in the public interest what optometrists state they do in the matter of referrals and would go a long way in the right direction of protecting the public.

We submit this committee does not intend to authorize optometrists who admittedly are not medically trained to practice medicine, concerning the 1200 known diseases of the human eye, which is an integral part of the body as a whole.

I wish to thank the committee for the opportunity to present the views of the medical society of the District of Columbia.

Mr. SISK. Thank you, Doctor, for your statement. Mr. Magee.

Mr. MAGEE. I do not have a written statement. I desire to present certain information which the committee asked for in questions this morning.

I would like to briefly refer to certain testimony produced before your committee and give certain facts and figures which the committee asked for.

Mr. SISK. If you will do that as briefly as possible.

Mr. MAGEE. I will try to be brief, Mr. Chairman.

First, I do want to comment, as an attorney, on what is the practice of optometry.

May it please the committee, as the cases have held and as history shows, optometry measures light waves as they go into the human eye. Now, this is done for the purpose of producing single, normal vision through two optics. This practice comes from the law of optics. If you have a jewel on your hand, a diamond or a ruby, refractions were used in this field long before they were ever brought into the eye field to measure the light waves as they entered into this object and as they come out. This is the function, Mr. Chairman, of optometry. It measures these waves and it adapts lenses in an effort to correct them. When they step outside of this field and get into an effort to either diagnose or treat any abnormal condition involving pathology, these gentlemen are in the field of medicine and the definitions in the present act put them there.

The Medical Society submits that the present definition of optometry is sound; it has been affirmed by the highest courts of Maryland and in the District of Columbia, and a new definition of optometry is not needed. Now, the optometrists have stated that there is an economic problem and that persons do not come to the District of Columbia who are trained in optometry, Mr. Chairman, because of the conditions in the District of Columbia.