

Our chief reliance for professional integrity must no longer be placed on the unified fee system which is rapidly becoming obsolescent, but rather on a substantial examination fee, standing separate and aloof from all other charges. A substantial examination fee can be commanded only in unimpeachable professional environments, so that the store-type of practice will have to be relegated to an honorable place in our history.

Although some 40 states have laws against corporate practice, New York State seems to have had more difficulty in this regard. Anti-corporate practice bills have been passed by the State Legislature twice, and twice they have suffered gubernatorial vetoes. On his own initiative, an attorney general recently began a suit against corporate practice of optometry, and a State Supreme Court justice declared corporate practice illegal. Yet, New York optometry still pursues this elusive phantom with a determination that has virtually become a crusade. The fact still evades many that the corporate practice of optometry exists only because the dispensing of ophthalmic materials is seen so closely into the fabric of the profession itself.

Even today, no one in New York can obtain a certificate of incorporation to practice optometry, any more than one can get such a certificate to practice law or medicine. A corporation cannot be licensed to practice a profession. For this reason, suggestions that present corporations be so exempt, to prevent future corporations from hiring optometrists, has always been bad advice. It needs to be clearly understood that the corporate employment of optometrists could not exist if optometry were, in fact, divorced from the dispensing of eyeglasses. Profit from eyeglasses is all that interests such corporations.

The Hart Bill, if expanded to include optometrists, might offer us a rare opportunity to cut loose from our commercial ties. From this point of view, it should be thoughtfully considered. In the final analysis, the bill simply confronts us with a challenge to "take the profit out of eyeglasses." If the bill is passed and is applicable only to ophthalmology, we can expect the charges of commercialism in optometry to be renewed with redoubled violence—and, perhaps, not without justification. We are at another dangerous crossroads.

DISCUSSION—A DIVISION OF LABOR TO RESOLVE OUR CONFLICT WITH OPTICIANRY

(By S. Drucker, O.D.)

The relationship of optometry with opticianry, while never wholly satisfactory, fell to new lows in recent years chiefly due to two factors; first, the development of contact lenses; second, the squeeze by refracting physicians who are now dispensing eyeglasses with the approval of the American Medical Association. Many ophthalmologists have expressed annoyance at the attitude of some opticians in referring to contact lens wearers as "my patients." Some opticians have been wondering whether their former relationship with ophthalmologists as an ancillary medical group should not be altered in favor of a more independent stand that would involve a more friendly relationship with optometry.

The recent suggestions by Senator Hart of Michigan that dispensing of eyeglasses be separated from diagnosis so that a physician would not profit from the sale of ophthalmic materials, seemed to be based as much upon ethical considerations as upon the monopolistic practices which his subcommittee was considering.

Opticians can be expected to support the Hart proposals with enthusiasm, just as they were encouraged two years ago by the action of the California legislature prohibiting physicians from operating drug stores unless licensed separately by the Board of Pharmacists. There seems no valid reason why states that license opticians cannot legally take similar action in dispensing.

What is more difficult to understand is how any reasoning that may be applicable to physicians would not apply with equal force to optometrists.

The fee system is ostensibly the accepted system of our own profession. If the system is observed in fact, as well as in print, severance of the dispensing of eyeglasses from their prescription should bring no serious hardship to professional optometrists. With safety glasses, and pre-paid plans that call for provision of glasses to union members and others at cost, an increasingly larger percentage of our income is being derived solely from examination and other