

area, therefore, have ample opportunity to have their prescriptions filled at prices which reflect the elimination of the rebate system. Such patients may, of course, go to dispensing houses which have not reduced prices or may use expensive specialty frames which make for a high price for the completed spectacles, but the patient does have the opportunity of making a choice on a competitive basis.

DISCUSSION—RECOGNIZE THE REAL ENEMY IN A WAR FOR SURVIVAL!

(By Arnold R. Wolfson, O.D.)

Dr. Sakler's address to the American Association of Ophthalmology (Jan. 15, 1967 issue) was more than a mere reiteration of ophthalmology's attitude toward optometry over the past many years. This attitude has undergone periods of ebb and flow, deviating between bare tolerance and absolute subjugation of optometry.

Dr. Sakler's speech indicates the present attitude is that optometry, as we know it, is to be eliminated.

Dr. Sakler states that optometry is not an allied medical specialty, the ophthalmologist must be "Captain of the Team," and ophthalmologists must train additional "ophthalmic technicians" to assist them. These statements, when taken together, lead to the inescapable conclusion that ophthalmology wants complete charge of all eye care utilizing the services of technicians. Optometry, since it is not allied with medicine as an "allied medical worker", would then be completely ignored.

Formerly, this would have posed no particular threat; this attitude is not exactly foreign to us and all but the most idealistic and naive optometrists have been aware of it. But now, the entire concept of eye care, and medical care for that matter, is undergoing a drastic change. More and more, we are encountering government participation, insurance plans, union plans, and prepaid plans. These rely on legislation and/or contracts between various groups and members of the eye care field to provide service. If medicine can influence these groups, dominate the field, and restrict such services to care by physicians, optometry will be on the road to virtual elimination. That is the intent of medicine today. The threat becomes very real when we consider the estimate that within five years almost 70 per cent of all glasses dispensed in California will be dispensed through such plans.

So far, what has organized optometry attempted to do? Up to now, our attitude has been: enter into some agreement with ophthalmology, don't offend them, and certainly do not dare direct confrontation with the American Medical Association. This attitude is no longer possible if optometry is to survive.

For years, ophthalmology has aggressively tried to discredit us. Physicians have told patients directly that we are incompetent. Dispensing opticians, formerly the advertising mouthpiece of ophthalmology, have emblazoned their advertising with "For better vision, see your eye physician"—or with similar statements implying the superiority of medical eye care. And all we have done about this is complain to each other and wring our hands in grief.

We have continually emphasized that we are divided between the so-called "professional" and "commercial" factions. We have put most of our efforts into an unsuccessful and unnecessary attempt to eliminate the one faction that has been attempting to bring optometry into the public light. We have degraded the members of our profession who have been presenting optometry to the public. I am referring to the "commercial" optometrists, who by their mode of advertising, whether in newspapers, radio, TV, or location in high traffic areas (such as discount houses, department stores), have been exposing themselves to the public as optometrists and have been exposing the public to their (and our) services.

We have attempted to emulate the physician, to copy his mode of practice. We have indoctrinated our students with this idea; we have told them that they should practice in medical-type surroundings and hide themselves behind their title "Doctor of Optometry". We have even said that if they must accept employment, they should work for an ophthalmologist or one of the medically-oriented and medically-operated health plans—rather than for a commercial optometrist and certainly rather than for an optometrically-operated vision plan or discount