

Mr. STEIN. If we can not employ optometrists.

Mr. GARBER. I am asking you whether or not there is anything in here that precludes you from selling frames and glasses.

Mr. STEIN. Just the pragmatic workings of the bill. If we do not employ optometrists, if optometrists privately practicing can not sell eyeglasses that they prescribe, our business will be cut back 65 percent. We will be limited to the sale of glasses upon prescriptions from ophthalmologists.

Mr. GARBER. In other words, your bread and butter depends on the employment of an optometrist in order to enable you to make a profit on the care of eyes of the community?

Mr. STEIN. As the matter now stands in the District of Columbia, in order for us to continue in business it is necessary for us to employ optometrists, yes. I might also say in regard to a matter that was brought up this morning, this question of patient referral. I believe that the evidence given by Dr. Albert indicates the rate of referral for commercial establishments, commercially or employed optometrists, or ophthalmologists, is considerably higher than that of the privately practicing optometrist.

Mr. SISK. If the gentleman will pardon me, I questioned Dr. Albert at some length and he did not say that. He said that it might be about fifty-fifty. He did not state it would be higher. And upon further questioning he said he didn't know.

I asked the medical people if they could get some figures. They would be interesting.

Mr. STEIN. If we take his figures at 50 percent, then the referral rate from the employed optometrists has to be greater. There are, we are told, approximately 70 privately practicing optometrists in the District of Columbia. I would say there are perhaps only 20 percent of that employed or 20 percent or 14 or 15 percent employed optometrists in the District of Columbia. If those 14 are making 50 percent of the referrals and the seventy are making 50 percent of referrals, I think it stands to reason that the rate of referrals by the employed optometrists is considerably higher than the privately practicing optometrists.

Mr. SISK. Mr. Stein, I do not wish to pursue this further but that brings up another question. Do I understand from you that there are only some 15 employed optometrists by corporate interests here in the District?

Mr. STEIN. I would suspect there are perhaps that number. Less than twenty in the District of Columbia. Yes.

Mr. SISK. How many corporate optical places are there in the District? Do you know any by chance?

Mr. STEIN. I do not know. The reason I have a problem ascertaining that is that many of the so-called privately practicing optometrists also apparently own opticianary establishments. If I looked at the phone book I would see an opticianary establishment or an optometrist's phone number at the same address or the same phone number and the same address. I would not know whether that was a truly employed optometrist or whether that was a so-called privately practicing optometrist who is his own opticianary corporate establishment there.