

The Angle Orthodontist

*A magazine established by the co-workers
of Edward H. Angle, in his memory. . . .*



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JANUARY AND
APRIL

Editorial Department

1946

Dentistry Faces a Great Opportunity

Never in its history has dentistry faced as great opportunities for advancement as those before it today. In the light of past achievement this may seem like a rash and exaggerated statement. Yet if we consider that progress lies essentially in manpower and equipment we find at our door the best qualified students in the history of dentistry and at no other time has there been as extensive and energetic a program for building and equipment.

The veterans program has filled the dental schools and will continue to do so for the next four years, perhaps longer. Registrars and examining committees have been able to select classes with qualifications that exceed the wildest hopes of previous years. The raising of entrance demands has encouraged those rejected to continue their studies and improve their credentials so that we may expect at least a temporary advance in the quality and quantity of predental training as well as greater maturity of the applicant.

The post-war dental student is offered three rather than two years of predental liberal arts courses, has a grade point average nearer to a B than a C, and is motivated by a stronger purpose than those seeking dental training in the past several years. Approximately half their number are married and many have one or more children. They come to school not to throw plaster, drink beer, or join fraternities, but to learn and later to practice dentistry.

The veteran is critical and demanding of his faculty. Many have more teaching experience than their instructors. While lacking in the knowledge of the technical and fundamental sciences which they come to learn, not a few

have acquaintance with the methods and techniques of pedagogy and are not content with slipshod grading and intuitive appraisalment of their efforts. While some have difficulty in adjusting to the routine of classes and the task of study, on the whole, it is easier than the regimen of business and trade.

An appreciable minority have misinterpreted the financial assistance provided by virtue of their military service. Whether it be from the unfortunate phrasing of political speechmakers, or within the bureaus concerned with the provision of these funds, it is evident that some have assumed they were being *given* an education. The veteran is not given education, he is given the opportunity to learn. In the interest of maintaining educational levels in all branches of learning, it is incumbent upon the schools, colleges and universities that educational standards be protected notwithstanding the tremendous pressure that falls upon them due to the veterans program.

Not only has a high quality of neophyte come to the field of dentistry, but a fortunate combination of increase in national income and appreciation of dental health have made possible the initiation of building and re-equipment plans which with prosperous years can be expected to continue. Within this interval the present facilities for dental teaching and research will experience their greatest actual, though perhaps not proportional, expansion in the history of dental science.

There has never been a time when so many new dental buildings were in the process of construction and in the work shop of the architects. Areas of the country long handicapped without a local dental school are eagerly watching their construction and many existing institutions suffering with antiquated structures and obsolete equipment are tearing out partitions and raising old plants to be replaced by new. These structures will contain new and modern equipment.

Most remarkable of all is the attention, long overdue, to the salary level of full-time personnel. There has been a most intelligent and gratifying trend to raise the remuneration for teachers. All have agreed for years that it was stupid to expect to train well-qualified practitioners under the tutelage of a staff that received less than their students would earn the first year after their instruction was completed.

For the moment at least, there exists a great opportunity to advance the science of dentistry and its professional body. The circumstances which make this situation are transitory, hanging as they do upon socio-economic conditions which already point to change. We must, in the years immediately before us, gain the most for dental education and fortify against the day when we are less fortunately situated. We may, in this way, gain two steps up the ladder not more than one of which we will have to relinquish.

H. J. N.