

training. To advise removal of all obstacles to the care of normal maternity cases by their family doctors would have required courage, but it would have shown wisdom and foresight. It would have prepared the way for every future general practitioner to have adequate obstetric training, thus abolishing the need for an obstetric list, and it would have been a tremendous stimulus to a renaissance of general-practitioner obstetrics giving better maternity care than can be provided by a semi- or pseudo-specialized service.

REFERENCE

Fitzgerald, T. B., *Lancet*, 1959, 1, 403.

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF GENERAL PRACTICE

The annual congress of delegates of the American Academy of General Practice was held on 4th April, 1959 at San Francisco, California. In his address, Dr Mac F. Cahal, director general, announced that after eleven years of steady progress, the membership had reached 25,000, but he warned his audience that this rapid growth had brought new problems. The real issue he said, was "how may we be assured that the advancement of general practice as epitomized by the Academy will keep pace with advancement in other fields of clinical medicine". The Academy's programme had been carried on under three heads: (1) No system of medical care can be better than the underlying structure of general practice. (2) It is essential that adequate numbers of practitioners of high calibre be attracted to general practice. (3) Given an adequate preparation in undergraduate training, continued postgraduate study is the best guarantee of excellence in the practice of medicine and surgery. Dr Cahal wondered whether the present criteria for admission to membership were sufficient and tentatively suggested a written examination as a measure of competence; "perhaps our progeny—our British cousins who copied our original example—are on the right track after all". This is, indeed, a fascinating prospect. While we in this country have been first swinging in favour of examination and later having second thoughts, our colleagues in America are now wondering whether the promise of continued postgraduate study is sufficient guarantee of high medical standards and are toying with the idea of a written examination.

When the criteria committee of Council collected the views of the faculties the only fact which stood clearly out from a welter of

suggestions, was that most members favoured continuing post-graduate study as a prime essential of membership. The stimulus that the American Academy has given to general practice in the United States is clearly demonstrated by the fact that, in 1948, 31 per cent of graduates were entering family practice and that the figure had reached 51 per cent in 1953. We learn that 53 per cent of medical practitioners in America are today engaged in family practice and that four out of five Americans now have a family physician to whom they turn first when they are sick.

Although the conditions of practice are vastly different in the two countries the ideals and aims of the Academy and the College are identical. We will do well to study carefully each others difficulties.

THE PRESIDENT'S HOSPITALITY FUND

Family doctors visiting this country from overseas are entertained from time to time by members of the College, and there is a growing need for some form of hospitality fund to cover part of the expense of this.

Close liaison with colleagues in other countries is of the greatest importance to our College's work; and when several hundred of the College of General Practice of Canada visit Britain—as they are to do this summer to attend the joint British Medical Association and Canadian Medical Association meeting in Edinburgh in July—the problem of arranging suitable hospitality, to repay that so generously given to our own doctors in Canada a few years ago, is one which merits careful thought and the taking of considerable trouble.

It has been suggested that many members and associates of the College, especially those who have been entertained cordially themselves when travelling abroad may care to contribute towards a **President's Hospitality Fund**, to enable us to play our part in entertaining Commonwealth and other overseas general-practitioner visitors.

Council has agreed that a notice stating that such a fund has been opened should be published in the Journal; and it is much to be hoped that the response will be generous.
