

that the book should represent a statement of College policy. But Pereira Gray (1974) quoted in the very same issue writes, "The Royal College of General Practitioners states..." and then goes on to quote from *The Future General Practitioner*. The position *de jure* may be as the authors say; *de facto* the book is widely regarded as a bible.

Is the book of the five areas to go the same way as the five books of Moses—in practically every household, repeatedly quoted, but hardly anyone living by it? A continuing, critical and relevant debate of the real issues may prevent *The Future General Practitioner* being relegated to a place of such honour.

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THE FUTURE GENERAL PRACTITIONER— LEARNING AND TEACHING

Sir,
I was relieved to hear from its authors, *Learning and Teaching* (March *Journal*) that *The Future General Practitioner* was not written as a statement of college policy.

I cannot object to direct quotation from my letter (November *Journal*) but must take the strongest exception to mis-representation. The sentence starting "Dr Eastwood seems to argue" is a transparent device for setting up an Aunt Sally which is then vigorously demolished. By this means, views are attributed to me which I do not hold and which indeed I entirely repudiate. I do not believe that "because physical diagnosis is so difficult, other important variables, psychological and social may be safely ignored." I do not dislike the chapter (chapter 2) on the consultation ending on p. 20. In fact I felt that the penultimate paragraph on that page was a model of pellucid clarity compared with the mathematical woolly-mindedness of pages 67 and 70. My letter was in keeping with the avowed aim of the book (pxi) "It is written to stimulate the thinking of general-practitioner teachers."

If I may take a longer view, I should say that publication of *The Future General Practitioner* represented a stage in the development of the College. It was over-reacting to the previous neglect of psychiatry and sociology and in doing so presented these subjects in a dogmatic manner out of keeping with the reality of such uncertain areas of human experience. By implication it seemed to belittle the importance of clinical medicine.

The point has now I think been taken that psychiatry and sociology are important to medicine and it is now time to look ahead to our commitment to clinical medicine and to the maintenance of professional medical standards.

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RABIES

Sir,
May I suggest that someone with first-hand knowledge be invited to write an article on rabies for your *Journal*?

The disease in animals is spreading across France and is now at Dieppe. It could conceivably reach England via the ferries (Calais/Dover or Roscoff/Plymouth) or via the many smaller ports on the south coast (e.g. Totnes, Dartmouth, or Salcombe in Devon).

The chance of human infection in England would be small, even if the animal population were infected for a radical policy of extermination would probably be followed. Even if bitten, I gather only about 25 per cent actually contract the disease.

However, I think an early warning would be worthwhile, as the all-important factor would be early diagnosis. An early diagnosis can be made from study of the animal which made the bite, but the animal would probably not always be available. Clinical features described are irritation around the bite, fever and elysplagia, but are these early symptoms or "too late" symptoms? I don't know.

I believe your *Journal* would serve a valuable role in raising the subject and clarifying early diagnosis now, rather than waiting until the first fatal case and then getting excited about it in retrospect.

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Would readers generally welcome such an article?
—Ed.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Sir,
I hear from time to time that in some areas there is difficulty in recruiting trainees for three-year schemes, and in others discontent among those who are already taking part. Recruitment for vocational training schemes is planned, I presume, for those doctors who have decided on general practice as a career, and have just finished their preregistration year.

Many young doctors now are alarmed by the threat to the future of the National Health Service and are anxious to get out and about and see for themselves before making up their minds. By