

MARIE STOPES LECTURE

Sir,
The Marie Stopes Memorial Lecture 1975 reproduced in your pages was, as the title suggested, nothing short of an undefended attack on those who did not share the views of the speaker.

I have practised a considerable amount of family planning in my career, but I found the lecture unconstructive and unifying. And since the speaker was presumably preaching to the converted, I really saw no point in her diatribe.

Still less do I see the reason for devoting very extensive journal-space to such an exhausted topic.

JULIA COTTER

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Bridgnorth,
Shropshire, WV16 5AN.

REFERENCE

Simms, M. (1975). *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, **25**, 709-19.

VASECTOMY FOLLOW-UP

Sir,
I think that Dr H. Meadow's approach in his letter (October *Journal*) is out of place in an academic journal.

Furthermore, I fear that he is trying to teach my ex-senior partner to suck eggs. Dr L. N. Jackson has an unusually equable temperament. His excellent reasoning ability is a compliment to his years and to the intellectual virility of his generation.

Whether Dr Meadows likes it or not, "mutilate" is an emotive word and in this scientific context an unhelpful one. In addition his definition taken from *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* is misleadingly incomplete. It should read "... render

(book etc.) imperfect by excision, etc. . . .". Dr Meadows omits the words in brackets and two other important meanings of the word.

The rudeness in his first paragraph and the distortion in the last, inevitably make the scrambled egg in the middle of the sandwich somewhat suspect.

C. H. MAYCOCK

REFERENCE

Meadows, H. (1975). *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, **25**, 766.

IS THERE DISCRIMINATION IN THE BMA?

Sir,
Yes, there is discrimination in the B.M.A. Let the tumbrils roll!

BRENNIG JAMES

Cherry Orchard,
Marlow Common,
Bucks.

REFERENCE

Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners (1975). Editorial, **25**, 706-7.

NUFFIELD EXPERIMENT

Sir,
It might be helpful to your correspondent (November *Journal*) if I were to quote my personal experience.

I passed the MRCGP examination in 1971.

My personal scores, in the tests of factual knowledge which I undertook during the Nuffield Course, were below the average for the course.

R. HILLMAN

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Park North,
Swindon.

BOOK REVIEWS

Index of Human Ecology (1974). JONES, J. OWEN, JONES, ELIZABETH A. Pp. 169. London: European Publications. Price: £4.50.

Of the making of books there may well be no end. There are those to be enjoyed and put aside, perhaps not to be opened again, and others which are put down close at hand in the confidence that they will be needed again and again. Books of reference are in a class apart, they are the basis of contemporary knowledge and they contain the materials of which future advances will be constructed. Every discipline has its own books of reference. Most have their specialist journals, each becoming narrower in its perspectives as the subject becomes more elaborate and sophisticated. Even within a discipline, cross-communication

between workers in different specialties becomes more difficult.

Medicine is, perhaps, fortunate in that with dentistry and veterinary science, it is one of the few disciplines in which the generalist survives and is now becoming confirmed in the general nature of his approach by appropriate special training. There is someone, still, who can think responsibly about orthopaedic surgery and psychiatry and obstetrics as these and many other subjects come up in random sequence. There is still a general practitioner because medical care cannot do without him, and medical science needs him as someone who can contain the diverging specialties and make of them something like a coherent whole. Other scientific disciplines are