

THE NEIGHBORHOOD STORE—HOW TO TRAIN FOR IT.*

BY WORTLEY F. RUDD.

The implication in the subject is that there is a difference between the requirements for a successful neighborhood pharmacist and the man in a metropolitan district. I think there is. Further, I am assuming in the selection of the subject that in the main the neighborhood store will continue to be independently owned. This too, I think, will probably be true—certainly in that section of the country with which I am most familiar.

With these two as my chief assumptions then, let us analyze quite critically what personal qualities and what sort of training are required that our neighborhood pharmacist may make himself so indispensable to his constituency and at the same time such a good business man that his place as an independent is permanently fixed in both the economic and social scheme.

I shall include the small-town druggist, of course, in what I have elected to call the neighborhood druggist. Taken by and large, the owner of our neighborhood store knows by name a very large majority of his customers. He knows their individual tastes and their potential buying power. He knows, in many instances, their family problems, health conditions, business relations and personal habits; in fact, I am inclined to the belief that he at least has the opportunity of knowing more about those who come to him for service than does any other community member—not excepting the physician and the minister.

If these things be true, and most of them I believe are generally conceded to be, his requisites for success are a composite of sound intelligence, good judgment, business acumen, fundamental training, good health, industry and a pleasing personality—a large order to be sure, but a real deficiency in any one of them is often his undoing.

It is manifest then, that the most important single step in preparing men for successful neighborhood proprietorship is in finding the right sort of high school graduates who may be interested in such work. Frankly, this is a very difficult task. Often the boy, who gives evidence of a reasonable share of the essential qualities enumerated, cannot even be induced to think seriously of pharmacy as his life's work. Little wonder that this is true. At present the demands of pharmacy are manifestly too great for its compensations. I am aware that this is a rather unusual statement to come from one in administrative charge of a state school of pharmacy. Right here I want to say that if I believed for one minute that this condition was inherently a part of pharmacy and would therefore continue, I would be unfair to myself and to those young men and women who come into our school to encourage them to remain in pharmacy.

This is tantamount to saying what all of you must know, *viz.*, this pharmaceutical generation, the one to which you and I belong, with its economic, legal and educational pressure, must resign itself to a sort of vicarious existence that such intolerable conditions may not be passed on to those that are to come after us.

The neighborhood druggist! What will be his status in 1960? I venture to say that the answer to the question is almost, if not wholly, in the hands of those en-

* Section on Education and Legislation, A. Ph. A., Rapid City meeting, 1929.

trusted with the selection of the right men, giving them the right sort of cultural and professional education and inculcating in them the proper point of view about pharmacy—its opportunities, obligations and social significance.

Coming then directly to the subject of this paper—"How shall we train the neighborhood druggist?"

In the first place, and I repeat this, the selection of the right sort of men is of primary importance. This is a joint responsibility—the present retail pharmacist, the travelling man and the jobber all may help the schools in making these selections. Practically every young man making application for admission is known personally to one or more of the above. Cutting off the unfit right at the source must be done ruthlessly. I doubt that this is being done as it should be.

Once in training, what shall we do for him? Certainly not what the average school is doing for him now. The graduate in pharmacy of to-day is well trained neither in business nor professionally, nor is he given the culture which his position demands. I hold that the neighborhood druggist of the future must have all of these—another large order—but I believe it is imperative.

I often wonder just what were the determining factors in the decision to go to a four-year course in pharmacy. In some states—my own, for example—this may cut down the number of students to an almost dangerous minimum, and yet in spite of this prospect, we have committed ourselves to it. Why have we done it? Isn't it due to a slow but steadily growing conviction that the chances for the ultimate survival of the independent are directly proportional to the lifting power of the training we of the schools give him?

It seems to me then, that with this prospect before us, any sort of detailed discussion of this training would be superfluous. The point I hope to make is that in going from the two-year course to the three and then to the four, we are recognizing the utter inadequacy of the old, and are therefore discarding it for an opportunity to do something for men of the next generation which may save them from a repetition of what we have seen and are seeing now. Would any of us have our own sons trained for the pharmacy of to-day? Have our schools of pharmacy on the average yet any sort of conception of this larger view of pharmaceutical training? Even granted the vision on their part, are our faculties well qualified to do the job? In a study made a year ago and presented to this Section on "Professors of Pharmacy," the inadequate training of many men holding this, the most important chair in our schools, was, I think, clearly proved. But why run on any longer? I find it exceedingly difficult to get anywhere in this paper. I would not have written it, however, if I were not firm in the belief that there is a way out. I am not alone in the position I take. I think most of us are in a sort of maze. I wonder if it is not well that we are not cocksure of ourselves in this connection! I am wondering if this uncertain state of mind is not a hopeful sign. I venture to raise the inquiry—wouldn't we be further along now if this sort of spirit had been prevalent earlier in the history of our educational problems? I have no answer to my own inquiries—probably you have.

May I sum up then, in a single paragraph, all that I have tried to say in the foregoing paragraphs?

The kind of training we have given our pharmacists during the past generation and right on into this one is as much responsible for our present chaotic condition

as any other one thing. Further, to save the independent at all, from now on his education must make him just as cultured, just as broad, just as adaptable, just as skillful as any other group in the complex community life in which he is to serve. Education, and not legislation, is, I believe, his only way out.

ABSTRACT OF DISCUSSION.

James H. Beal, in discussing the paper, stated that for a number of years pharmacy has been scattered all over the shop and it was questioned whether all parts could be put together again. There had been times when he had been almost hopelessly discouraged, but he did not feel that way any more; the type of young men going into pharmacy had encouraged him. He referred to Benjamin Franklin's remarks at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention in 1787—he had been wondering whether the sun on the back of the President's chair was a rising or setting sun—with the successful conclusion of the day's work Franklin believed it to be a rising sun; so the speaker felt, because of the incoming young men and women that the sun of pharmacy is rising.

Rudolph H. Raabe agreed with the foregoing speaker that pharmacy was progressing.

THE RETAIL DRUG STORE A NATIONAL NECESSITY.*

BY R. E. LEE WILLIAMSON, BALTIMORE.

I believe there is no one in this audience who will dispute the statement made by me in the title of this paper. I believe that anyone who will give the matter a moment's serious thought, be he a layman or a pharmacist, will confirm the statement that the Retail Drug Store is a national necessity. That being accepted, why should I presume to present, to you of all men, an address which has for its purpose, judging from its title, an effort to influence you to accept the fact set forth as being a fact when you have no contrary opinion.

Let me, at the very start, assure you that I have no such intention. It is, however, my purpose to proceed immediately on the basis that you are convinced beyond any doubt that one of the vital necessities of the nation is the Retail Drug Store; and then, if possible, to arouse in you a keen sense of responsibility, and through you as leaders in pharmacy, this sense of responsibility in other members of our profession, so that this necessary service of the Retail Drug Store to the people of the Country will be preserved and improved that it may meet the requirements of the ever changing conditions and customs of living. To preserve the Retail Drug Store and improve it, there must be, on the part of every pharmacist, a willingness to look squarely in the face the changes that are constantly taking place in the business methods of our day and time; to face these changes without prejudice—with a determination to adjust our business to them; not trying to accomplish the impossibility of fighting against a modern trend.

I am convinced that the Independent Retail Drug Store can maintain its position of respect and confidence in the mind of the public—preserving its professional standing as a pharmacy and at the same time conducting a retail drug business on a dignified modern and profitable basis. But, to accomplish this, there must be given an open-minded consideration of the modern methods of conducting the retail business. We must clearly understand that new methods are adopted because of the demands of the people and the necessities of the times. They are

*Section on Commercial Interests, A. PH. A., Rapid City meeting, 1929.