1980

Editorial

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Editorial

The *I.S.U. Veterinarian* features as a regular addition an editorial page. The views expressed in each editorial are those of the author alone and not of the *I.S.U. Veterinarian*, College of Veterinary Medicine, or Iowa State University.

The *I.S.U. Veterinarian* welcomes letters to the editor and will attempt to publish all. The editors reserve the right to edit. Letters should be submitted with the author’s name and address to: Editors, The I.S.U. Veterinarian, College of Veterinary Medicine, Ames, Iowa 50011.

It has now been over a year since the Arthur Little report on veterinary manpower needs was published. The surplus of veterinarians that the report predicts has been the topic of articles, letters to the editor, speeches, and conversation wherever veterinarians gather. Responses to the predicted surplus range from the restrictive (cut enrollment and restrict the entry of foreign graduates) to the expansive (explore new career fields for the veterinarian).

It now appears that, if the federal government has its way (and, for better or for worse, they usually do in these matters), those who take the expansive point of view will make more progress in finding an answer to the manpower surplus. The Federal Trade Commission has made it clear that attempts to limit veterinary college enrollment by professional organizations would be considered as a form of trade restraint and be opposed by the FTC. In addition, the publicity resulting from any restrictive action would reflect poorly on the public image of the veterinary profession.

With this avenue closed to us, we are left with the more constructive (but also more difficult) approach of expanding career opportunities for the increasing number of veterinarians in the job market. Meeting this challenge must begin in the veterinary colleges. Veterinary schools and students must realize that, in an increasingly competitive marketplace, the graduate with the most diversified education who is willing to accept a job from a wide variety of fields will have the competitive edge. Students who decide early to specialize in a single area and colleges who encourage this specialization may well be disappointed.

Veterinarians must continue to take an expansive view of their capabilities when they graduate. Our education qualifies us for a wide variety of promising careers that few veterinarians have explored in the past; we can no longer afford to limit our outlook to one type of practice.

The proliferation of veterinary colleges and the resulting manpower surplus should show us that there is another area where we can no longer restrict our outlook: politics. While veterinary college enrollment climbed at an unprecedented rate in response to political pressure over the past few years, veterinarians and veterinary students blindly went about their business. In view of the result, can we continue to be this politically naive?

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