

# UNDER THE DOME OF THE CAPITOL



## LEGISLATION — REGULATION OR REVENUE

JOHN H. WARREN, D.O., *Chairman*

Like every other taxing authority, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania desperately needs more money—and that's something no osteopathic physician in this state can afford to forget, especially now.

Which is why your Legislative Committee feels that the recent changes in professional license fees were highly significant, if not more than a little suspicious, both as to what happened, and even more from the standpoint of what might conceivably happen in the upcoming 1960 session.

To be sure, a nearly successful attempt to increase our osteopathic license fee from \$5 to \$10 was caught in the nick of time and knocked down. In the end, all that apparently happened as far as we are directly concerned was the establishment of a new, two year registration at \$10, instead of the former annual registration at \$5. In an "equalization", medical physicians fees were increased from \$1 to \$5 annually, also payable biennially.

On closer inspection however the matter isn't quite that simple, both in regard to how the change was brought about, and also as to why any increase should be deemed necessary to begin with. We think our membership should know all the facts.

The new fee system was first presented as merely a "bookkeeping" measure, in which registry would cover a two-year period instead of only a single year. This would have, of course, cut clerical costs and made registry a little more convenient for all. In this form the bill was in no wise objectionable. However, by the time the bill came up in the Senate on third reading, it had been altered to increase our license fee from \$5 to \$10 annually. Quick action, in which all professions joined, forced this fee-hike proposition into committee,

from which it finally emerged in the "equalization" form subsequently passed.

The manner in which the fee-increase angle was slipped into the otherwise innocent "bookkeeping" measure, with but little apparent effort to consult with those directly concerned, left many in Harrisburg with a justifiable feeling that some action to prevent further attempts of this sort are needed at once.

It should be remembered that, as an established practice the only purpose for which these fees are collected anyhow has been to provide funds for the support and actual expenses of the various examining boards needed to maintain our high professional standards. We can have no quarrel with this approach to the general question of license fees. But these boards have operated within the income derived from these sources, which naturally gives rise to the question of just why was any increase at all written into a "bookkeeping" bill?

Let's just take a long, hard look at the facts.

As was said to begin with, Pennsylvania desperately needs money, and so long as this is so there remains the possibility that professional license fees may be under scrutiny not as a proper **regulatory procedure**, which is entirely reasonable, but as a **source of revenue**, which is simply preposterous. This potential threat has induced your Legislative Committee to gladly accept an invitation to a combined meeting this month of representatives of many professions affected. The meeting will appraise the situation with a view to co-operative action if necessary.

Your Legislative Committee will actively support our fellow professional men, lawyers, architects, medical physicians, nurses, dentists, chiropractors and chiropodists in a common front against any further attempt at exploitation of this kind. In so doing, your Committee, needless to say, relies on the backing of our membership in any fight that may develop to protect us from tax grabs of any kind.