

MEDICAL REFORM GROUP OF ONTARIO

UPDATE

January, 1980.

For the benefit of members and friends of the Medical Reform Group living outside Toronto and Hamilton, we have compiled this update on recent activities of our group. Further details will be forthcoming in the next issue of the newsletter, now scheduled to appear in late February or early March.

IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP UP TO DATE?

A reminder that membership fees for the Medical Reform Group for 1980 are now due:

Graduate physicians	\$25
Medical students	\$15
Others	\$5

If you have not completed a membership form, one is enclosed. PLEASE COMPLETE IT and return it to the Medical Reform Group at our box number. We are updating our membership lists, and need to know who we represent.

MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Since the Medical Reform Group went public in November, interest in our activities has ballooned, and we now have about 300 names on our mailing list. We are in the process of revising and updating our membership lists, so precise figures are not yet available, but our current membership is in the neighbourhood of 200; more than 90% of these are physicians or medical students.

At present, there are active MRG chapters only in Toronto and Hamilton, but organizing efforts are underway in other centres:

KINGSTON- Eight or ten people came to a first meeting in November, and there are plans to meet again early in the new year.

LONDON- A meeting to establish a London chapter has been scheduled for January 27.

SARNIA- Our lone but energetic member in Sarnia has been scouring the area for other sympathetic physicians.

Increasing our membership will be a priority for the Medical Reform Group over the next few months. Membership drives are planned for London, Ottawa, Kingston, and Sarnia. If you would like to help, or even undertake a membership campaign in your own area, please contact us. Or if you know of other physicians who would like to join the MRG or receive our mailings, please send their names and we will contact them.

P.O. BOX 366, STATION 'J', TORONTO, ONTARIO M4J 4Y8

Outside Ontario

As far as we know, the Medical Reform Group of Ontario is the only formally-constituted organization of its kind in Canada. We are hoping, however, that sister organizations will be formed in the near future. The potential exists now for groups in B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, and Nova Scotia: our objective is to become a national organization by the fall of 1980.

PAMPHLET ON THE MEDICAL REFORM GROUP.

By late February, we should have available a brochure about the Medical Reform Group, and copies will be sent to all those who are presently on our mailing list. 10,000 copies are being printed, and although the pamphlet focusses on the Medical Reform Group in Ontario, it can be used or adapted for membership campaigns elsewhere.

We plan to distribute the brochure as widely as possible—through drops in hospitals, mailings in selected centres, public meetings, etc. We welcome any assistance that members can provide.

WORKING GROUPS

A brief rundown on the working groups currently active:

ECONOMICS

The economics group is focussing its current efforts on the preparation of a brief to the Hall Commission. (see below)

HEALTH AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT

This working group, centred in Toronto, will look at health care in the third world, and native health care in Canada. Upcoming activities include:

- a forum on health care systems in Chile before the coup, Tanzania, and Nepal, with MRG members who have worked in these countries
- participation in a medical aid program to support reconstruction in Nicaragua

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

An occupational health working group in Hamilton will be acting as a resource for Hamilton area unions, and preliminary discussions about the development of an occupational health clinic have begun. In Toronto, a two day educational, run in conjunction with the Toronto Occupational Health Resource Committee, is being held in late February.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

A Hamilton-based group has been meeting to discuss the pros and cons of differing models of community health centres.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

This working group, based in Toronto, will look at the environment as a factor in health and disease. The focus will be broad, covering the roles of industrialism, technology, economics, and education in the genesis of health and disease.

Policy papers and resolutions from all of these groups will be presented for debate at the next general meeting.

NEWSLETTER

A newsletter working group is developing a proposal for a national publication for presentation to the next general meeting. In the interim, our newsletter will try to maintain communication within the MRG on a more modest scale.

Please let us know of events and happenings that might be of interest to other MRG members; we would like to have the content of our publication reflect a wider area than southern Ontario.

BRIEF TO THE HALL COMMISSION

The Medical Reform Group will be presenting a brief to the Hall Commission (also known as Health Services Review 79) outlining and amplifying our positions on opting-out and cutbacks. This will be an important public forum. The Commission will be measuring current attitudes towards the administration of the

health care system, and recommending changes. They are anxious to hear from as many individuals and groups as possible.

The Canadian Medical Association and the provincial medical associations have announced their intentions to participate fully. We feel that it is urgent that the voice of physicians who do not support the stand of the medical associations be heard, and urge MRG members, either singly or in groups, to make their views known.

Hearings begin in Saskatchewan after the federal election. The commission can be reached at:

Mr. Donald N. MacLeod,
Executive Officer,
Health Services Review '79,
Suite 707,
229 4th Avenue S.,
SASKATOON, Saskatchewan
S7K 3N9

(306) 653-0665

GENERAL MEETING

The weekend of May 24, 1980 has been tentatively selected as the date for the next general meeting of the Medical Reform Group of Ontario. Further details on location, days, and times are yet to be decided. The meeting will be an important one, however, and we hope that as many MRG members as possible will be able to attend.

The agenda will include, among other items:

- debate and adoption of policy resolutions from the working groups
- establishment of new MRG regional chapters
- discussion of proposal for a national publication
- preliminary discussion about the establishment of a national organization
- by-elections for the Steering Committee

We welcome papers, resolutions, ideas, or contributions of any sort from out-of-province members and from Ontario members who are not members of active chapters. We need to have your involvement if we are going to be more than a Toronto-Hamilton organization.

THE MRG AND THE MEDIA

The response to our first press release in November was overwhelming. And, disparaging editorials in the Medical Post notwithstanding, highly supportive. We are regularly asked to comment on medical issues, and our spokespeople have appeared on dozens of radio and television programs, and in public debates and conferences.

We are receiving inquiries and requests for membership from across the country, and though we are small, we are growing.

It is vital now that we expand, and that we develop groups across the province and across the country, or we will be in danger of becoming a southern Ontario anachronism. The Steering Committee will assist, in any way we can, in developing new chapters and new provincial groups.

Please let us hear from you.
