

MEDICAL REFORM

GROUP NEWS

Volume I
Number 1

November
1979

This first issue of the newsletter of the newly-constituted Medical Reform Group of Ontario is coming to you in a somewhat truncated and hastily-prepared form. Following the very successful October general meeting, and coming in the midst of a hectic and heady time for our group, we felt it best to communicate the bare essentials of what has been happening, particularly for the sake of those who were unable to attend the general meeting.

Our next issue will appear early in the new year, if not sooner. We welcome- or better, need- contributions from regional chapters and individual members, for example:

- news on events that have been happening in your chapter or area
- news of upcoming events of interest to MRG members
- news of working committees
- more in-depth articles on issues of concern
- letters, beefs, births, deaths, etc.

If you can draw, we would love to hear from you: we welcome graphics, cartoons, or any assistance you can give.

Contact one of the members of the Steering Committee, or write the MRG (address above). WE NEED YOUR ACTIVE SUPPORT: the Medical Reform group will only be as strong as the collective activities of its members.

MAILING ADDRESS

Medical Reform Group of
Ontario
P.O. Box 366,
Station J,
TORONTO, Ontario
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NEWSLETTER

If you would like to work on the newsletter, please indicate on the membership form, or contact us.

The first meeting of the newsletter working committee will be held in early December. You will be contacted when the time and place have been finalized.

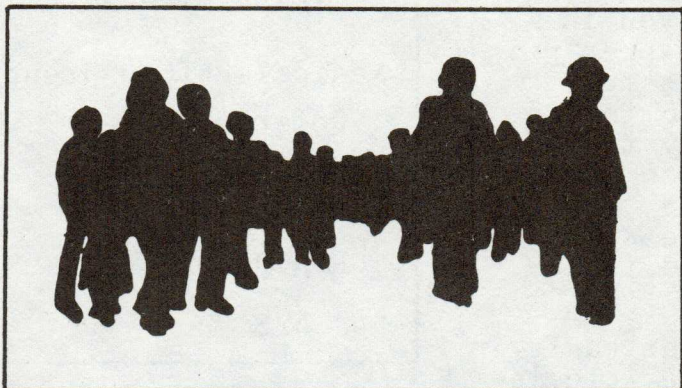
WHO IS ON OUR MAILING LIST?

The mailing list of the Medical Reform Group of Ontario contains close to 200 names, almost all of whom are physicians or medical students. Well over one half of these are members of the MRG; the rest are divided between people who have expressed an interest in learning more about the group, but have not indicated whether they plan to become members, and people who we thought would be interested in and/or sympathetic to the aims of the Group. Several people on

our mailing list have asked that they continue to receive our mailings but have indicated that they do not now wish to become members. And, inevitably, there are probably a few perplexed souls

who cannot imagine how or why they receive these strange missives from time to time.

We are now in the process of revising our mailing list; we hope that you will want to stay in touch, either as a member or by continuing to receive our mailings.



MEMBERSHIP

By becoming a member of the Medical Reform Group, you are indicating that you are in basic agreement with the principles of the Group as elaborated in the Constitution. Because the activities of the MRG are founded on these

principles, you are adding your name to an expanding list of physicians who believe that there is a need for a public voice for progressive, socially-conscious members of our profession.

Membership does not imply agreement with all positions taken by the Medical Reform Group. We are a democratic organization; MRG policy is developed and ratified or rejected democratically. It is clear, however, that no single member will agree with every stand taken by the MRG; these represent the views of the majority, and not necessarily the views of each individual member.

Nor does membership impose any duties beyond paying fees. MRG members will not be publically identified with the group, unless they choose to volunteer to act as spokespeople. The privacy of our mailing list is guaranteed in the Constitution. However, the course of the MRG is set by its most active members. As activities develop in differing areas, it is in your interest to become as actively involved as you can- to help to formulate and influence MRG policy, and to benefit from the educational and social side of the group. And perhaps more importantly, to share in the excitement and camaraderie of working with other like-minded physicians.

For those who have not already completed a membership form, we have enclosed one with this mailing (yellow). Please complete it and return it as soon as possible to the Medical Reform Group.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Membership fees in the Medical Reform Group of Ontario are set by a General Membership meeting, and due on January 1 of each year. Fees for different categories of membership are listed on the next page.

These fees are obviously low, and any contribution above the level set would be very welcome. All work in the MRG is done by volunteer labour; we have no paid staff. Your fees, and any

contribution above this will be used to fund the newsletter, other mailings, general and regional meetings, expenses for steering committee meetings, publicity, organizational campaigns, etc.

No member will be refused membership because he or she is unable to pay, but we appeal to you generosity: our survival and

growth depends on it. You will receive a receipt upon payment of your membership fee from the regional treasurer or the treasurer of the Steering Committee.

For Toronto and Hamilton members, the treasurer of the regional chapter will be collecting membership fees; these can be paid at an upcoming meeting or mailed to the appropriate mailing address. For others, these can be remitted to the Steering Committee at the Toronto address of the provincial organization.

For those who want to remain on the mailing list, but do not want to be counted as members, there will be a charge equal to the cost of the category of membership you would be eligible for. Your name, however, will not be included for the purposes of determining membership.

Membership Fees

Full/Affiliate members who are graduate physicians	\$25
Medical Students	\$15
Associate members	\$5

(all fees are for one year, and due on January 1)

THE OCTOBER 14 GENERAL MEETING

About 65 people attended the second general meeting of the Medical Reform Group of Ontario, held at Hart House in Toronto on October 14. Minutes of the meeting and copies of the resolutions passed are enclosed with this mailing.

The Constitution was adopted with a few changes: affiliate members of the MRG are now voting members, though they cannot hold office in the provincial organization, and minor changes have been made to the Statement of Political Purpose, and to other provisions of the Constitution. You are referred to the minutes of the meeting for further details. Members of the Medical Reform Group and those who have requested to be kept on the mailing list will receive a copy of the revised Constitution. The general meeting passed resolutions on opting out and cutbacks which are included in this mailing, and elected a Provincial Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee for 1979-80 consists of four members each from Toronto and Hamilton, and one from each of Southwestern Ontario, Eastern Ontario, and Northern Ontario. There are, at present, three vacancies on the committee.

It will be left up to the regional chapters of Toronto and Hamilton to fill their vacancies on the Steering Committee. Volunteers from Northern Ontario are being sought.

October 24

Toronto: Cynthia Carver
Debby Copes
John Marshall
one vacant

Hamilton: Jan Christilaw
Nick Kates
Annalee Yassi
one vacant

Southwest: Barbara Lent (London)

Eastern: Robert Ward (Kingston)

Northern: vacant

The provincial Steering Committee met for the first time in Toronto on October 24. The following positions within the Committee were agreed upon: Liaison Co-ordinator- Nick Kates, Treasurer- Debby Copes, Secretary- John Marshall. The chairing of the Committee will be on a rotating basis.

A decision on whether or not to support the Toronto Coalition Against Cutbacks was deferred until the Medical

Reform Group has an independent public existence. A future issue of the newsletter will focus on other groups whose aims are similar to ours.

Work on a brief to the Hall Commission will be undertaken in conjunction with the economics working committee. Any member interested in contributing is asked to contact either the Steering Committee or a member of the economics working group.

It was decided that announcing our existence to the media was a matter of high priority, and a press release was drafted.

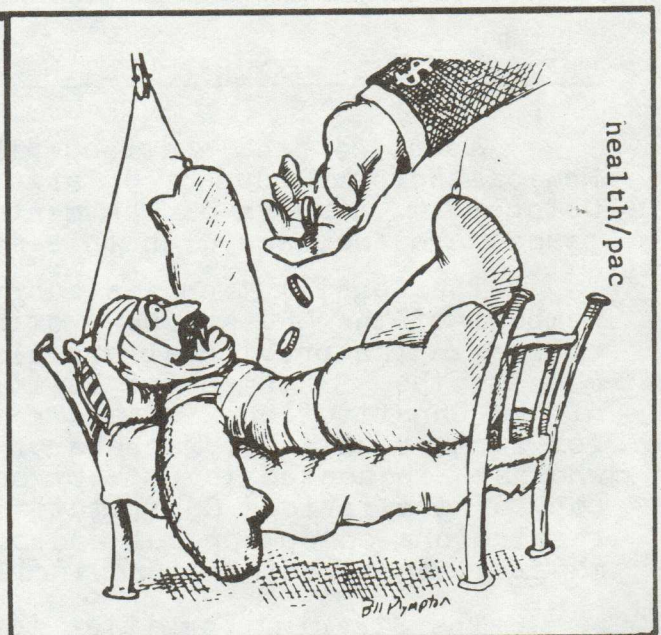
Detailed minutes of the Steering Committee meeting are available on request from the executive of the regional chapters or from the provincial steering committee.

The MRG Goes Public

On November 1, the Medical Reform Group issued its first statement to a highly-receptive press. We outlined the history and objectives of the Group, and elaborated the Group's position on opting out and cutbacks. Releases were made simultaneously in Toronto and Hamilton.

The Toronto Star carried the story as front page headline news; the Globe and Mail gave us a very sympathetic hearing, but relegated us to page 5. A Star editorial on November 3 welcomed the formation of the Group, saying:

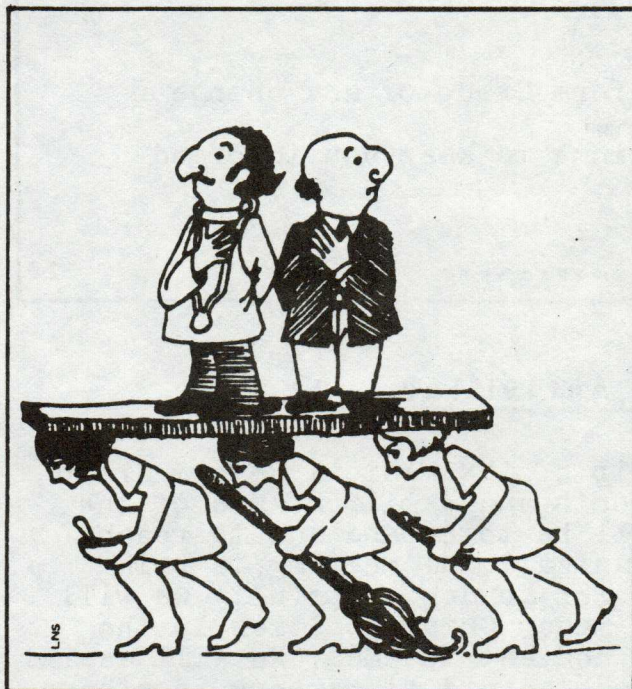
"(Their) goals aren't new. They've been discussed in countless studies by committees, commissions, and task forces. But maybe now that some doctors are supporting them, something will finally be done."



Additional items were carried by major television and radio stations in the Toronto and Hamilton areas. And we continue to receive requests for interviews, speaking engagements, and debates.

It is still too early to assess the impact of our first foray into the public limelight. In general, though, the response has been overwhelmingly sympathetic: the formation of the MRG has been welcomed by the leaders of the Ontario Liberal and New Democratic parties, by the Patients' Rights Association, and by various labour bodies. The OMA has been somewhat more reserved. They have commented that we represent less than one per cent of the doctors in Ontario, and a spokesman, Eugene O'Keefe, referred to us as "a rump group of the medical profession".

Copies of several articles from the Toronto press are included with this mailing.



THE WORKING GROUPS

At present there are two active working groups in existence: the economics group which drafted the position papers on opting out and cutbacks, and a working group on occupational health, based in Hamilton.

Now that the preliminary organizational work of the MRG has been completed with the ratification of a Constitution, most of the activities, policies, and directions of the MRG will come from the working groups, and we would urge you to become involved. These working groups can consist of any number of interested members.

They will focus on a particular issue, provide research and education to the MRG membership, and prepare a resolution or position paper on the issue for consideration by the next general membership meeting. Once adopted by a general membership meeting, the recommendations and resolutions of the working group become official Medical Reform Group policy.

The economics group is planning to further develop our initial positions on the issues of opting out and cutbacks. A brief to the Hall Commission is planned, and discussions for work on the question of alternate methods of physician payment are underway. Now that the MRG is a public force in the campaign to defend medicare, the demands made on this working group will increase. If you are interested in playing a role in developing the MRG's policy on these vital issues, please contact us; future regional mailings will outline the direction being planned and the dates for upcoming meetings of this group.

The Hamilton occupational health working group can be contacted through the Hamilton box number (Box 1019 Hamilton L8N 3R1), or through any Hamilton member of the Steering Committee. Further

details will be available in the next issue of this newsletter, or in an upcoming Hamilton mailing.

Other working groups are being planned- on health in the Third World, community clinics, and environmental health. These need the support of interested members. Even more importantly, we need your involvement on issues that are of concern to you. The working groups will provide you a chance not only to shape the policies of the MRG, but also to research, discuss, and debate issues which are of importance in your own practice or for your future plans.

News from the working groups will be a prominent part of this newsletter in the future. We hope that you will become involved.

ARE YOU MOVING?

Please notify the Medical Reform Group of any change of address, so that we can continue to keep you informed of MRG activities.

Organizational Activities

As you are aware, the membership of the Medical Reform Group is concentrated in the cities of Toronto and Hamilton. One of the immediate priorities of the Group will be to expand and to reach other sympathetic physicians. An organizational meeting is being held in Kingston, and one is planned for London. Hopefully we will be able to undertake drives in other major Ontario cities in the near future. If you can help, please contact the MRG; we will assist you in every way possible, but we need the aid of members in other centres.

We also want to see the MRG develop into a national organization as soon as possible. We have about 40 to 50 affiliate members across the country, and expect that this can be improved upon substantially. With the constitutional revision allowing affiliate members to vote at MRG of Ontario meetings, we are not so far from becoming a national organization. We hope that the Ontario constitution will be adopted in other provinces, and that parallel organizing drives and public campaigns will be undertaken.

Any out-of-province member who is willing to undertake this organizational work is urged to contact the Steering Committee. We have lists of members and interested physicians in other provinces and these can be used as the basis for an organizing campaign. We will aid you materially and morally as much as we can.

MRG CALENDAR

Details of upcoming events within each regional chapter will, as in the past, be announced via regional mailings.

Where possible, however, we will try to announce these in the Newsletter, to keep all abreast of the activities of the different chapters.

TORONTO

December 1 (Saturday) Regional meeting: a potluck supper will be held, followed by a party and social. Details to follow.

HAMILTON

December 5 (Wednesday) Regional membership meeting
A discussion of community clinics will be featured on the agenda. Details to follow.

January 23 1980 Regional General meeting
Election of Regional executive
Regional constitution
Issues and Resolutions of regional concern

KINGSTON

November 14 (Wednesday) Organizational & recruitment meeting

*The Steering Committee will meet again in December; date and location as yet undecided.

*Meetings of the working groups will be announced in regional mailings, and in upcoming issues of the newsletter. If you indicate your interest in being involved in any of these on the membership form, we will contact you by phone to let you know about the dates and locations of these meetings.

And Finally ...

Our active membership has, in the past, been limited to a few dozen members in Toronto and Hamilton. If you are one of those who has been on the mailing list, but involved in the activities of the MRG only peripherally or not at all, we would like to invite you to take a more active role.

Our experience over the past few months has shown graphically that there is a need for an organization such as the MRG, and the response of the media and the public has underlined this. We hope you will join us in actively advancing our ideals.

