

J. Lester

July 4, 1970

Dr. Robert Garber
President, APA
Carrier Clinic
Belle Mead, New Jersey

Dear Bob,

The form APA letter of June 30, signed by Mrs. Frances Davis, epitomizes the basis for my resignation from the APA. In reading this letter, I was prompted to think of the reasons for my abrupt action, and a relationship of almost 20 years prompts me to express the reasons for my distress.

I joined the APA about 1951. I was active in my district branch, the Nassau NP Society, founding its Newsletter and becoming President in 1959. I was also active in the APA, serving as an officer of the Section on Brain Function for many years; have often presented papers and participated in round tables at meetings; and refereed many articles for the Journal. For the past year, in my district branch, I have served as chairman of the committee on biological therapies. In view of this active relationship, why this action and why now ?

I believe the APA is much too big and too impersonal. It is insensitive to the needs of individual members. It tries to speak for all, and I fear may speak for none. Surely the views of the APA are not my views.

Some of the impersonality is seen in the following incidents. In 1966, I returned from St. Louis, where I served for four years to establish the Missouri Institute of Psychiatry. On my return, I was invited to participate again in the committees of the Nassau NP Society. Because my office was in New York, and because it served the interests of the Department to have me participate in that society as well, I applied for membership in both, and was told by the APA that it was illegal to be a member in two district branches ! Dutifully, though disappointed, I resigned from the Nassau NP Society. (Incidentally, the threat in the last paragraph of Mrs. Davis' letter is childish.)

For years I have participated in section meetings at the APA. Most general sessions are much too big to allow discussion. The section

was small, and though it occupied only one day of the meeting, served to provide continuity for discussion and growth of ideas. The demise of the sections provided another loss of the personal touch of the society.

The APA meetings receive many abstracts, and the Program Committee complains that it is overburdened. For a number of years, I have recommended presentations by younger men, only to have them rejected. Surely this would not be a problem, if we were not repeatedly faced by programs in which some participants present more than once, often the same material in different sessions. For example, in San Francisco, the NIMH Bunney-Goodwin team presented many times. This is another example of lack of sensitivity.

The dues increase, while necessary to assure a larger administrative structure, is another symbol of 'big business', and served as the trigger to my resignation.

Perhaps this explanation is merely a rationalization for frustrations; or, perhaps it is a reflection of the necessary growth of the association. I hope it serves the Trustees to consider, if only in passing, the drive to impersonality in the association. Is it truly necessary ?

My best regards, and with the awareness that the job you are doing is often thankless, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry

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