

Points to ponder.

Doctors are central and typical members of our high-technology society and have a unique responsibility for health. That society is itself unhealthy to the point of knowingly threatening the survival of mankind, of destroying non-western cultures and of knowingly causing much gross and even lethal disease among its own members. The response of doctors to the first two evils is almost non-existent. Their response to the third, the production of disease in individuals, consists of the late, largely unsuccessful and sometimes harmful application of high-technology remedies to the sick persons, the remedies being analogues of the causes. In the process doctors deprive people, sick or well, of their autonomy in those spheres where it might properly and beneficially operate, and give support to our unhealthy and disease-producing society.

High-technology medicine is incompatible to some extent with compassion, which is what is needed most in the face of pain or death, both of which high-technology medicine, significantly enough, seeks not to make bearable but to control completely and even to eliminate. Our high life-expectancy in the west is due only in part to doctors, and is here and there now falling. Doctors neither condemn our present life-style vehemently nor show us an alternative. Above all, our society and its medicine being integrated, doctors cannot be absolved from a major responsibility for the state of that society, and they are not credible when seeking to separate the good that high-technology medicine does from the evils produced by it and by the society of which it and they are an integral part.

In view of all this, not to speak of many minor faults, I find western doctors today are certainly more productive, directly or indirectly, of ill-health, in every sense, than of health; and therefore in the terms of the brief of this court I have no hesitation at all in finding doctors 'Guilty' .

That most doctors - being often small-minded and of narrow vision - are perhaps unwittingly guilty may be pleaded in mitigation but hardly as a defense. We must look for hope, not to doctors, but to those, whether or not they are medically qualified, who see the need to create a new society, of which health will be an integral part (as ill-health is of ours); and who will search for the philoso-

phy, the religion, needed for the establishment of such a society. I say 'religion' deliberately. Youth may find such a religion; its parents hardly. The alternative is that the ill-health of our present society, its terrible cancerous disease, will prove mortal to it, and to us and to our children; and will ensure that our children's children shall never be born.

From: **Doctors on trial**. John Bradshaw. Wildwood House, London. 1978. Pages 3 12-3 13.

(*Editor's note: This is the concluding section from a thought-provoking book which takes the form of an imaginary trial of the medical profession in America being conducted by a British judge. All the points raised by the prosecution are backed by references to real papers in established medical journals such as *New England Journal of Medicine, Lancet*, and the *British Medical Journal*.)*

Study Groups

You are invited to attend meetings of the study groups being set up. The first such group concerns itself with pharmaceuticals - choice, number, formulations, manufacture, sales. ... - focussing on unhealthy trends and malpractices. The recent displacement of Mr. Arun Bhatia, an officer of unimpeachable integrity, who was proving a thorn in the sides of powerful drug manufacturers, from his post as chief of the Food and Drugs Administration emphasises the need for continued action on this front.

Another group will study the rampant malpractices in medical education.

Provisionally, the groups will meet once in two months.

We need help from individuals willing to serve as group leaders. We also need researchers and rapporteurs. Finally, as we prepare the definitive documents, we will need help in printing and distributing them.