

I am certain that for the dental profession the next 12 months will be the most momentous since 1948...

Presidential address

Dr Anthony Kravitz was installed as the new President of the British Dental Association at this year's 2004 National Annual Conference held in Bournemouth on May 6-8 2004. The following is his presidential address.

Thank you, Ralph, for inducting me as President of the BDA and also for the very flattering words of introduction preceding this.

People who know me well will be aware of the very great personal honour I deem it, to be installed as the President.

Shortly after the Representative Body nominated me as President-designate I stood at the top of the stairs in the BDA in Wimpole Street and read yet again the names of the illustrious previous incumbents of this high office – and found it difficult to believe that my name would be joining these, as the 117th President, in the BDA's 125th year.

I am thus deeply conscious of the responsibility that is attached to the office and I will strive to match the high standards set by these men and women. I am well aware that one does not achieve such high office, without the support of others. Firstly, I give thanks to the members of my branch, East Lancashire and East Cheshire, who originally nominated me and who have given me unstinting support during all my years in dental politics. I also pay tribute to the many members of the BDA, and the wonderful staff of the Association, who I served with on various committees – often as Chairman – for being so loyal and supportive during these years.

I have had many mentors during my career in dentistry and dental politics – many of them are in the audience today and I believe that they know how much I have



appreciated their advice and support. Finally, last but definitely not least – I pay tribute to my family, especially my wife Hilary, who have put up with the phone calls and the many absences – when I was buried with papers in my study or at meetings, in or out of Manchester.

Turning to my predecessor, Ian McIntyre and his wife Joan – it could not have been easy for you, being thrust into the central limelight, after being such a hard-working *background* member of the Association for so many years. Ian, you have been a splendid ambassador for the Association both at home and abroad. You have been kindness and courtesy personified, and I

know you have had a wonderful year. I cannot say more than that I would hope to be able to emulate you during my own year.

I am certain that for the dental profession the next 12 months are going to be the most momentous since 1948 – indeed arguably since the profession first became independent in 1878, when the first Dental Act was passed.

The first Representative Board meeting took place 125 years ago this week, and members faced very many problems in those first few months. Nevertheless, in that first meeting they did take the time to set up a Benevolent Fund, for distressed members of the profession and their families.

Many of the challenges for that first Representative Board meeting are still with us today.

They had ongoing debates about who should be registered. History repeats itself. So, during the early part of 2005, amendments to the Dentists' Act will formally introduce new classes of dental workers able to provide oral healthcare directly to patients and we are again debating this issue. Now, whilst I personally welcome the changes, which I believe will enhance patient care, nevertheless these changes will need careful management – by a watchful and interventionist BDA, if necessary. And, we will need to be assured that any changes are for the improvement of patient care, not just for political expediency.

Indeed, I believe that *who* delivers oral healthcare is the most important current issue in dentistry. At some stage soon the Workforce Review in England must be published and any recommendations arising from this announced. With further complications from the expansion of the EU last week, a strategy for dental workforce provision must be agreed in the very near future. Any such strategy may have profound implications for individual UK practice owners and those who provide the care, as well as those who determine policy at a central and local health authority level. I call upon the government not to introduce double standards – our problems must be solved without the UK denuding countries poorer than our own of the dentists or PCDs *they* have trained to provide care for *their* own citizens. Indeed, a wealthy country such as ours should be helping, not robbing these countries of their professional heritage.

The NHS dental system in England will change next April, and possibly in the rest of the UK shortly after. Time does not permit me to dwell on them here, and anyway the effects of the changes are being discussed at

length during various parts of this Conference. But I will make one point – dentistry's share of NHS resources has fallen from 4.4% ten years ago, to less than 3.1% now. Again, I call upon the government to refrain from double standards – to provide NHS dentistry with the same level of funding as the rest of the NHS.

Dentists have to come to terms with what for most will be the biggest change in their professional lives since they qualified. Many of our members, whether they are practice owners or associates, or in the salaried sector are deeply worried about how the changes will affect them, their staff and, not least, their patients.

Our dental workforce is the UK's valuable treasure. Ministers should know that the key to retaining this treasure, and a successful dental service, is a happy, well motivated workforce – which currently it is not. Nevertheless, we will need to remain a united profession – to accept differences and disagreements. So, I ask our members to continue to support the Association, even if we do not always perform to their personal agenda. I ask those who detract from what we stand for the question – what is better for helping to manage the changes ahead of us – a strong or a weak representative organisation? Our strength lies in our diversity: we are proud to represent dentists across the United Kingdom, wherever they work, providing NHS and private care.

During my visits to all parts of the UK in the next twelve months, my themes will include the 3 'Rs' – recruitment of new and former members, retention of existing members and responsibility.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen: I hope Oscar Wilde was out of order when he wrote:

"Whenever people agree with me I always feel I must be wrong."

The dental profession in its widest sense is in very good heart while its membership includes people of such calibre.

Valedictory address

Professor Ian McIntyre was installed as the President of the British Dental Association at last year's 2003 National Annual Conference in Manchester. At this year's 2004 British Dental Association's Annual Conference in Bournemouth on May 6-8, 2004, he gave his valedictory address.

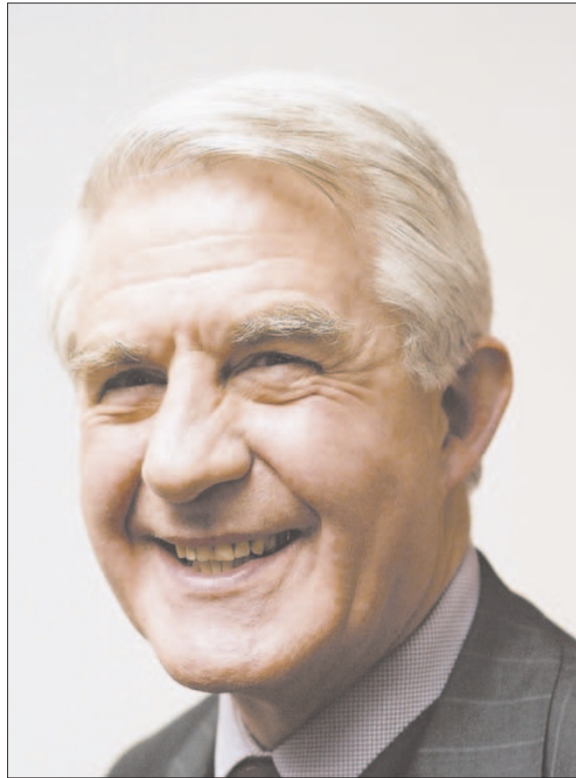
It is the role of a retiring president to leave the stage quietly and with decorum so that his successor can fully bask in the glory of the occasion. Short and to the point must be the order of the day for a

valedictory address and you will be pleased to hear that I intend to follow it.

However, I cannot depart from office without thanking the members of the BDA and colleagues in

our sister professions who have made Joan and me so welcome during the course of the past year. To say that we have had a wonderful time would be an understatement; it has been a privilege to be able to travel and meet such outstanding people and to see at so many dinners their generosity to the Benevolent Fund that is so important to me. The dental profession in its widest sense is in very good heart while its membership includes people of such calibre.

It has of course been an interesting year to be President on the political front as well. While the role is purely ceremonial and non political it would be impossible to avoid the



debate among members and to observe that morale among NHS practitioners is fragile. It has been a disappointment to hear occasional unjust criticism of the BDA from individuals whom I would have expected to know better. In that context, what I have learned, from personal observation, is that the BDA is fortunate to have both staff and elected officers who are dedicated to the best interests of our members and their patients.

As I step down, I must thank the Armed Forces Group for nominating me for what has been the outstanding year of my professional life and wish Tony as much fun as I have had. He is in for a wonderful year.