
Palmer College of Chiropractic/WEST

a division of Palmer Chiropractic University

1095 Dunford Way, Sunnyvale CA 94087

Telephone: (408) 983-4000

April 27, 1992

Mary Ann Chance, D.C. & Rolf Peters, D.C., Editors

Chiropractic Journal of Australia

P.O. Box 748

Wagga Wagga 2650 Australia

To the Editors:



Drs. Kyneur and Bolton's recent exchanges with Drs. Marcellino, Hart and Watkins (*Chiropractic Journal of Australia* 1992 [Mar]; 22[1]: 36-7) touch on a still not well understood but rather significant crossroads in the profession's history. Surprisingly, although the neurocalometer (NCM) episode marked a turning point in B.J. Palmer's authority within the profession, many details have become obscured, some perhaps owing merely to the passing of time, and others perhaps due to the passions that the NCM's introduction stirred.

Concerning the lease costs of the NCM, there is ample documentation from the pages of the *Fountain Head News (FHN)* that these rose from an initial, pre-lyceum figure of \$500, to \$1,500 at the time of the 1924 college home-coming, and to \$2,200 by September 14, 1924 (1). It should be noted that although the NCM was officially unveiled at the historic lyceum, it had been in use in the field for several months previously (1). In the *FHN* for October 25, 1924 BJ announced that the lease cost would probably rise to \$3,000 by January 1, 1925 (2). Since my review of these costs did not extend beyond the November 22, 1924 issue of the *FHN*, I cannot comment authoritatively about the eventual maximum lease price for the instrument. However, Dr. Quigley's estimate (3) of \$3,500 does not seem at all unreasonable. If someone would check later issues of the *FHN* the upper limits of NCM lease contracts could probably be more precisely determined; pricing was not something BJ was reluctant to discuss!

Of perhaps greater importance and less clarity is the manner by which the NCM's introduction created the great schism within the profession. I am inclined to believe Dr. Hart's (and his informant, Dr. Stover) assertion that the lyceum itself was not a scene of discontent. If members of the audience were distraught at BJ's "The Hour Has Struck" speech (4), they must have kept it to themselves. Although BJ's presentation in fact criticized the vast majority of the profession, he made a point of excluding those in attendance from such criticisms. It was my feeling as I read the lyceum presentation that BJ had a very clear sense that he was talking to a much wider audience than those who were in attendance (i.e., that he was addressing the profession at large). The PSC apparently disseminated the lyceum address (4) to the field soon after the homecoming.

Moreover, the schism within the Palmer faculty that followed the NCM's official introduction may not have been directly related to homecoming events at all. Harry E. Vedder, D.C., one of the four PSC faculty who subsequently left to establish the Lincoln College in Indianapolis, had in fact consented to introduce BJ at the lyceum (4). Whatever disgruntlement the NCM produced in Dr. Vedder seems to have *come after* the lyceum (5); indeed, BJ announced in October, 1924 that Drs. Vedder, Firth, Burich and Thompson (the "Big Four") were among the PSC faculty who had purchased

leases on the NCM (2). I suspect that the faculty revolt had more to do with subsequent restrictions on academic freedom than on lyceum events per se. Although Dr. Quigley has expressed his incredulity that Dr. Vedder would have remained at the PSC for very long after the 1924 lyceum (6), Vedder's May 15, 1926 departure from the PSC (19 months after the historic lyceum) was announced in the April, 1926 issue of the *Bulletin of the American Chiropractic Association*:

P.S.C. LOSES ITS 'BIG FOUR'

It is with regret that we announce at this time the resignations of Drs. Burich and Vedder from the faculty of the P.S.C. We are sure that this is a serious loss to the P.S.C., as taken together with the resignations of Drs. Firth and Thompson, the P.S.C. has lost its 'Big Four.' These latter resignations are effective May 15th, and no announcement has been made as to the future plans of Drs. Burich and Vedder. both of these men have contributed much to Chiropractic and we can but wish them success in whatever work they may take up following the severing of their connection with the P.S.C. (7).

Of course, it is possible that the above announcement was merely a formality, that is, that Vedder and Burich had departed earlier and it was merely their official separation from the PSC that would take place in May, 1925. As ever, further research is indicated.

Lastly, Dr. Watkins' comments regarding BJ's inflexible attitude toward subsequent studies of the meaning of NCM readings was documented in an interview with Andy Petersen, D.C. in the *Beacon* (Palmer College's student newspaper) about 12 years ago (8).

Sincerely,

Joseph C. Keating, Jr., Ph.D.
Professor

References:

1. Keating JC. Introducing the neurocalometer: a view from the Fountain Head. *Journal of the Canadian Chiropractic Association* 1991 (Sept); 35(3): 165-78
 2. *Fountain Head News*, October 25, A.C. 30 (1924); XIV(6):1-2
 3. Quigley WH. The last days of B.J. Palmer: revolutionary confronts reality. *Chiropractic History* 1989 (Dec); 9(2): 10-9
 4. Palmer BJ. *The hour has struck*. 1924, Palmer School of Chiropractic, Davenport, Iowa
 5. Keating JC. Letter to the editor. *Chiropractic History* 1990 (June); 10(1): 8
 6. Quigley WH. Letter to the editor. *Chiropractic History* 1990 (June); 10(1): 8-9
 7. Sauer BA. With the Editor. *Bulletin of the American Chiropractic Association* 1926 (Apr); 3(4):5
 8. Petersen A. Dr. Andy Petersen talks. *Beacon* 1980 (July/August); 3: 1, 10, 12, 13, 23
-

Join the *Association for the History of Chiropractic!*

741 Brady Street, Davenport IA 52803 USA

\$35/year regular membership; \$17/year for students