

International Understanding

As I write this, the troops from the coalition forces are returning home following the cessation of combat in the Middle East. The cooperative effort that was exerted by this consolidation of military forces proved to the world that groups from very different backgrounds can work together to attain a common goal. I believe the world learned several lessons from this joint effort, and the participants also learned a great deal about the benefits of cooperation—militarily and politically.

Unfortunately, much unrest remains on our earth, and with the apparent resolution of one conflict our attention is diverted to other areas of strife and discord. Hopefully, the spirit of cooperation that was manifest in the Middle East might be exercised in a nonmilitary manner to resolve these other problems and achieve a greater measure of international harmony.

I have alluded in the past to disparity between the levels of prosthodontic practices within and between nations. There are great differences in the standards of care and in the modalities of care that are considered routine. These disparities, as most differences, stem from individuals who have advanced theories and practices, have gained advocates, and have had their concepts spread through these proponents. Thus, Gysi became a leader for Swiss dentists, Fauchard for the French, Black for Americans, etc. Most allegiances are more provincial, but the adherents are no less loyal. All these segments grow within the confines of the particular political and social structure, and survive accordingly.

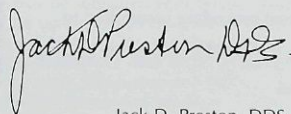
Although these esoteric enclaves have been eroded by time and travel, they still exist to some extent, especially in more politically isolated countries. One of the goals of publications such as *The International Journal of Prosthodontics* is to break through the barrier of language and allow a freer exchange of ideas, allowing the concepts to stand on merit, not nationalistic bias.

It is a challenge for an author to publish outside the journals of the mother language, and it is, admittedly, sometimes a problem to effect translations that are lucid and direct. Not only are the words different, but the manner in which thoughts are expressed also varies. The accepted manner of written communication differs and it sometimes takes perseverance and understanding for an author whose primary language is not English to withstand the editing necessary for suc-

cessful publication. Parochial idioms must be deleted, provincial concepts must be broadened, and although form and context of the English language may seem arcane to the author, they must be respected. International cooperation takes many forms. As with more consequential international relationships, both parties must see a benefit to participate and must patiently cooperate to obtain the desired result.

Another manner in which ideas may be effectively shared, and more personal understanding gained, is through international conferences. These take no small amount of faith in the interest that will be raised and the attendance that may be attracted to support the meetings. In our specialty, the International College of Prosthodontists has undertaken this task, and has thus far held several successful forums for the exchange of ideas. The opportunity to meet one's peers and share ideas, concepts, and techniques at the most personal level effectively erodes the parochial biases and misconceptions that many of us unknowingly harbor. It is always challenging to find how different ideas might be concerning the procedures and perceptions of prosthodontics. It is not always easy to comprehend the language, but it is always worth the effort. I have no patience with those who refuse to spend time trying to decipher less than perfect English. I hope that purgatory for these people is spent in a foreign language environment.

The next meeting of The International College of Prosthodontists is to be held in Hiroshima, Japan, September 21–23. This meeting also involves an international "coalition," and the organizers have combined the meeting of the Japan Prosthodontic Society with that of the ICP. It promises to be an immensely interesting and stimulating meeting and offers the opportunity to broaden personal and professional awareness. I hope you will make the effort to attend and share in this international exchange. International understanding begins on a personal level.



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