

EDITORIAL

AT LEAST WE KNOW IT IS CHRISTMAS

1985 has been a bad year. Beginning with the continuing horror of famine in Africa the year ended literally with a bang — the bloodbath at Valetta Airport in Malta. In between there was a series of death, mayhem and disasters in Beirut, Sri Lanka, Mexico City and Columbia. Nearer home, the countries have not fared well either. There was an abortive coup in Thailand, continuing instability in the Philippines, an ugly incident in Baling, Malaysia and the severe economic downturn in Singapore. Our beloved profession has not been spared. Doctors have been receiving a battering this year what with numerous complaints in the newspapers and unsavory publicity generated by a few members of our profession. There have always been incompetent and dishonest doctors just as there are dishonest lawyers, politicians and policemen. What the profession must do is to isolate these individuals, weed them out and if necessary “throw the book at them.” Majority of us are hard-working and nice people just trying to make a living and bring up a family. It would not be inappropriate to have a “Be Nice To Doctors” week. The public must realise that there are limits to our forbearance, physical energy, medical knowledge and even medicine itself. We cannot always be smiling, correct and lovable. To paraphrase Shakespeare

“If you prick us, do we not bleed?
 If you tickle us, do we not laugh?
 If you poison us, do we not die?
 And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?”

— The Merchant of Venice

and may I add, if you are nice to us, shall we not reciprocate?

Fortunately the year in review has not been completely bleak. On the international political scene the meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev must be rated as a plus. Nationally the eloquence and intellectual discourse displayed by our Prime Minister and First Deputy Prime Minister in U.S. have done us proud. There have been no labour unrest inspite of fairly severe retrenchment in certain industries. Because of the economic slow-down certain goods and services have in fact become more affordable. Singaporeans continue to take their year-end holiday abroad although they may curtail their spending and opted for places nearer home. For unlike the starving millions in Africa, at least we know it is Christmas. Therefore have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year if you must but spare a thought and a prayer for those less fortunate than you — and that means more than three-quarters of humankind!

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Editor