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Dr. Louis Perkel
Jersey City
Chairman Constitution Committee

October 13, 1958

Dr. Lynn A. Ferguson,
Secretary - General
American College of Gastroenterology
72 Sheldon Avenue, S.E.
Grand Rapids 2, Michigan

Dear Dr. Ferguson: Perkel.

My heart has been heavy every since it was announced that the American College of Gastroenterology will hold its 1958 meeting in New Orleans, La. It seems unfortunate that no one at the time of acceptance of the invitation was alerted to the fact that attendance at this meeting must be subject to racial discrimination by state and local law, as well as by long standing custom.

I have been a participating member of the American College of Gastroenterology and its antecedent organization, the National Gastroenterological Association for many years. I have had great pride in this membership, because of its liberal heritage. This liberal heritage applies not only to race, religion, and national origin, but it has declined to set itself apart as a self styled, oligarchy of intellectual aristocrats. But rather it has dedicated itself to the service of all who have a serious interest in Gastroenterology. It is obvious that I cannot attend the meeting of the college at the Jung Hotel in New Orleans, La. during its 1958 session. I should like to say however, that if the policy of the organization for the future shall include the acceptance of invitations for its meeting in an area where racial discrimination is practiced, I would take it to mean that my membership is no longer welcomed in the organization. However, as a fellow in good standing, I should prefer to ask the organization to go on record as being against such future meetings by amending its constitution. I feel that today truly liberal organizations must be willing to stand up and be counted. I propose therefore that article IX, Section 1A be amended as follows:

"No meeting of the college shall take place in a state or city or hotel, or other institution where discrimination is practiced against individuals because of race, creed or national origin". Any wording which you may prefer that expresses the same thought will be satisfactory to me.

I trust that this letter can be brought before the organization at its New Orleans meeting. Sincerest regards and best wishes.

Very truly yours,

Leonidas H. Berry, M.D.

LHB:dlb.