

NEWS AND NOTES

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THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

Letter from The President

The following letter was sent to all Fellows, Members and Affiliates on 22 May 1972. (References to functions to be held on dates previous to the appearance of this issue are omitted.)

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to keep you informed of the developments that have occurred within the Royal College since the Annual General Meeting of November last. I am glad to be able to report that we have made considerable progress in resolving some of the issues that confronted us during the early weeks in the life of the College.

We have pressed ahead with the task of making the influence of the College felt in relation to the future planning and organization of the mental health services and the problems of postgraduate training that are inextricably entwined with it. Bricks and mortar, sophisticated planning informed by epidemiological and other evidence and skilful organization are not enough. The quality of the mental health service will be largely decided by the quality of those who work in it.

Following informal meetings with the Secretary of State and Sir George Godber, we have taken steps to plan a conference on the theme of 'Providing a comprehensive district service for adult mental illness'. The Chairmanship is to be shared between Sir George Godber and myself. There will be representatives from every Region within England and Wales, and papers will be presented by a number of those who have been actively engaged in the systematic study,

planning and evaluation of the mental health services. This should provide valuable opportunities for psychiatrists to learn at first hand how the thinking of the Department is evolving, to communicate and exchange views, and to

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make known the influence new developments are exerting on the life of patients and those responsible for their care.

The Appeal and Building Committee has begun its work, and within the next few months we hope to launch an appeal for a substantial sum to enable us to build the College's first home and headquarters. The matter has suddenly acquired urgency because of the possible lapse of our lease at Chandos House at the end of 1973. Council has decided that it is vital for the College to have a presence in London alongside the other major disciplines in medicine. However, while our larger plans mature we must take immediate steps towards acquiring in the immediate future a house to serve as our headquarters in London.

The College building we have in mind as a major objective of our appeal should provide accommodation for our library, administrative offices, lecture hall, seminar rooms and adequate facilities for social occasions. It should act as the nerve centre which coordinates the activities of the different Regions and develops the work of our Standing Committees. There is a feeling also that our College should provide a certain amount of accommodation for workers who will be engaged in organizing those types of scientific activity that require the cooperation of many centres in different parts of the country and which the College will be particularly well-equipped to undertake. We do not aim at a Scientific Institute of the kind housed at the Royal College of Surgeons; but it would appear desirable that our home in London should be a living centre where scholarship and enquiry as well as administration and organization are undertaken.

We look, of course, mainly to Charitable Trusts and other benefactors able to dispose of relatively large sums. But without the active interest and concern of our Fellows and Members we are unlikely to make rapid headway. I feel my responsibilities heavily in this matter. Having regard to present trends in the price of property in London, the cost of an adequate building may well, within a very few years, pass beyond the realizable means of any organization such as a Royal College. I should like therefore to appeal to all those who are

able to give us any advice or assistance that might help to advance this cause to get in touch with me as soon as possible.

The College is deeply indebted to the Board of Examiners and to its headquarters staff for the intense, unrelenting effort they devoted to organize within a short time the complex exercise of a postgraduate examination conducted at three separate centres.

We are making a beginning within the next few weeks with the opening of our College Register for Inceptors. This should enable all those who embark upon a systematic training in psychiatry to secure some status within the College and to obtain our Journal at minimum cost.

Some of the misunderstandings that confronted us in the early stages of the College's life arose from failures in communication which we have tried to remedy. Shortly after the Annual Meeting a review of all exemptions was undertaken, and the decisions were put into effect at the first Membership examination. I believe that the results of this and the experience of this examination, for which there were 324 candidates, have done a good deal to generate greater trust and dispel misunderstanding. A more constructive and cooperative atmosphere has been created, and although differences of opinion remain there is reason to hope that the channels of communication opened up have created the means of dealing with them.

I have taken steps towards creating the informal contacts with our junior members which I promised to establish at the A.G.M. On 25 April I met representatives from all parts of the country from Regional Divisions, University Departments of Psychiatry and the Association of Psychiatrists in Training. There were delegates from Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales. There was a free-ranging discussion in the course of which views were exchanged, grievances aired, a number of recommendations formulated, and, most important of all, contacts established with the young men in our discipline whose professional training must be in the forefront of the College's concerns. I have been greatly impressed in the course of these exchanges of opinion by the energy, thoughtfulness and serious purpose of many of our trainees.

They should prove an asset of inestimable value to the College. I believe this first meeting to have been a valuable one, and it will be repeated as soon as possible.

Although I have not relinquished my duties in Newcastle, I should like to make it clear that so long as I am President the College will have the first claim on my time. I should like to urge all Fellows, Members, and trainees to communicate with me about any issues or problems which are relevant to the College's work or for which they require its aid or intervention.

Having regard to the number of people for which the College has to cater, our organization

is very small and the offices and other facilities at our disposal are inadequate and unsatisfactory. We are trying to streamline our organization so that we can respond in a prompt and flexible manner to the many demands made upon us by the new developments within the Health Service, in postgraduate education and in relation to manpower questions. We shall also strive to respond, quickly, and in a manner one is justified in expecting from a College of Psychiatrists, to the appeals made to us by our colleagues.

Yours sincerely,
MARTIN ROTH,
President.

Other College News

At the Council meeting on 2 May the President gave an account of the meeting with trainee psychiatrists described above in his Presidential Letter. Council agreed that a Joint Working Party should be set up, on an *ad hoc* basis, to discuss the most appropriate ways of dealing with problems affecting trainees, the Party to consist of five members of Council and five representatives of the trainees. The Council's representatives are the President (Sir Martin Roth), the Dean (Prof. Rawnsley), Prof. Hamilton, and Drs. Bewley and Letemendia.

The relevant Standing Committees have been considering the future scientific activities of the College, and a new look is being taken at the future shape of College meetings. It is likely that, in the interests of scientific communication, there will be a separation between the administration and business meetings and those devoted to scientific papers and educational lectures or seminars.

Membership Examination. Of the 324 candidates who took the first Membership examination, 229 (70·7

per cent) passed. Of candidates allowed maximum exemption (taking the final viva only) 89·4 per cent passed; of those exempted from the written papers 69·6 per cent passed; and of those who received no exemptions 60 per cent passed. A more detailed statistical analysis of the results will be published later.

A list of hospitals which have been accredited, together with the category of accreditatives of each, will be published shortly. Substantial progress has been made with the appeals relating to Foundation Membership, decisions on which have almost been completed, and with those relating to Foundation Fellowship, of which about one half have been dealt with.

Council Vacancies. Vacancies for Divisional Representatives have arisen as a result of the election of Prof. Rawnsley as Dean and Dr. T. H. Bewley as Sub-Dean. These have been filled by the co-option of the runners-up in the Divisional elections, Dr. M. W. Annear for the Welsh Division and Dr. B. M. Barraclough for the Southern Division.

Memorandum on 'Hospital Services for the Mentally Ill'* (H.M.(71) 97)

1. While we would welcome a fresh approach to the question of improving hospital services for the mentally ill, we would by no means entirely concede that the policies advocated in the Memorandum can be wholeheartedly supported on current evidence. Although schemes similar to those outlined in the Memorandum have been implemented in practice in certain regions and by certain individual workers,

* A personal view of the Memorandum was given by Dr. Hugh Freeman in *News and Notes*, February 1972.

the transition to a stereotyped service on a national basis should, we think, have been approached much more cautiously. Pilot experiments in regions with contrasting psychiatric morbidity should have been considered, to be followed by a synthesis of statistical study, rather than an *ad hoc* acceptance of trends in certain specific areas.

2. The Department's Guidelines for In-Patients, Day-Patients and Out-Patients may well fall short of what is necessary for good patient care even if adequate community facilities were available, which