

# THE BULLETIN

OF THE

## ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

### COLLEGE NEWS

#### FUTURE FOR BRITISH PSYCHIATRY

##### Council discusses College role

*(from a correspondent)*

The President of the College (Professor Desmond Pond) called a two-day meeting of Council Members for 8 and 9 February for informal discussion of trends in psychiatric practice in the NHS, and what the College should be doing to shape them. Some of the trends were dictated by population changes, for example, the great increase in the number of old people and the survival of the mentally handicapped, others by swings in popular belief. For example, the mentally handicapped were now being seen as an educational rather than a medical problem. This tendency to oversimplify problems to extremes of black or white (a man is either bad and should be in

prison or mad and should be in hospital) was promoted by the growth of separate professions such as clinical psychology which wanted a place in the sun independent of the doctor. Such separatism in turn derived partly from a world-wide trend against the expert knowledge of the specialist ('elitism') and from a general loss of respect for the old professions such as medicine.

The NHS itself was a new force coming between doctor and patient. It inhibited alternative thought and practice and discouraged self-help. Amidst a plethora of committees and working parties it was difficult to see who actually took decisions. How in

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