

The College

WINTER QUARTERLY MEETING 1987

The Winter Quarterly Meeting was held at The Royal Society of Medicine, London on 27 and 28 January 1987 under the Presidency of Dr Thomas Bewley.

BUSINESS MEETING

The business meeting was held on 28 January 1987, attended by 66 Members of the College.

MINUTES

The minutes of the Autumn Quarterly Meeting held at Kensington Town Hall, London on 29 and 30 October 1986 and published in the *Bulletin*, January 1987 were approved and signed.

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

Since I presented my last report to you in November, Council has met once and the Executive and Finance Committee twice. There is much activity in the various College departments; however, I thought I would begin my report by drawing your attention to some future activities.

In April 1987 the Public Policy Committee is organising a meeting on "What is a Good Community Service: A Carer's Perspective". We have invited representatives from a wide range of organisations set up by patients' relatives and we hope that a Consensus Report will emerge from this meeting. The College, in accordance with its Charter, is increasing its activities in the public education field. Our first Christmas Lecture for School Children was given by Professor Anthony Clare at the Royal Society. Professor Clare's lecture "Aren't we all a little mad?" was very successful and so heavily oversubscribed that he has agreed to give a repeat performance at Easter. We are also organising special in-depth press briefings on a wide-range of topics varying from "Early Learning Difficulties for Children" to explaining our opposition to the proposed extension of licensing laws.

You will all have received a letter from the President appealing for funds for the College's new Research Unit. We have been encouraged by the response to date and have received covenants from: 131 Fellows; 210 Members; 57 Inceptors; 5 Affiliates and 1 Corresponding Associate.

Over a four year period this totals £113,704 (£28,426 yearly). We have also received a further ten and a half thousand pounds from individual donations. We are still

a long way from our target of one million pounds and covenant forms are available at the Registration Desk.

Council approved, at its recent meeting, the job description for the Research Director. As soon as funds permit we shall be advertising this position.

Council discussed various other matters which I would like to draw to your notice. It was agreed that, as from the Spring Quarterly Meeting 1987, Inceptors of the College should pay a reduced Registration Fee, 50% of the normal fee. It is important that trainees be given every encouragement to attend the Quarterly Meetings and we shall be monitoring their attendance over the next year to see if this innovation provides an incentive.

Council also agreed that the remit of its Special Committee on the Political Abuse of Psychiatry should be revised. Professor Rawnsley has agreed to chair the new Committee which will now be known as the Special Committee on Unethical Psychiatric Practices.

There was discussion at Council about the problems encountered by psychiatrists, particularly child psychiatrists, concerning access to information on health service patients by Social Services Managers. I have received letters from members throughout the country expressing the difficulties they experience in adhering to the current Guidelines of the General Medical Council. Council took this matter very seriously and we shall be contacting the various medical defence societies and other relevant bodies in the medical profession. We hope to prepare guidance in due course.

A Working Party of the Public Policy Committee has now prepared its comments on the Social Services Committee Report into Community Care. Council has endorsed these comments, subject to minor amendment, and copies will shortly be available from the Secretary on request. The Government has asked Sir Roy Griffiths (of "Griffiths Manager" fame) to conduct a review into the provision of community care and the College will be contacting Sir Roy Griffiths to offer whatever assistance it can.

This is Dr Bewley's last year of Office as President and an election will be held in February. There will be elections for other Honorary Officers subsequently and details will be published in the April *Bulletin*.

The Court of Electors met in December. The Court noted the recommendation of the Joint Committee for Higher Psychiatric Training that the desired duration of higher psychiatric training should be four years. The Court also received an analysis prepared by Dr Peter Brook on Advisory Appointments Committees. This will be published shortly in the *Bulletin*.

The next Quarterly Meeting will take place in April 1987 in Aberdeen and our Annual Meeting will take place in Belfast at the end of June.

The Programmes and Meetings Committee have organised jointly with L'Association des Psychiatres Français a very interesting study tour to Bordeaux in May. I understand that there are still some places available and further details are obtainable from the Registration Desk.

PROF. R. G. PRIEST
Registrar

Resolution

Dr D. Hollander introduced the following Resolution: "We condemn racism everywhere, and in particular the state

institutionalised racism of apartheid in South Africa with its associated gross inequities in the provision of health care, including mental health care; and we urge all members of the College to give every support to the Commonwealth Nassau Accord of October 1985, which agreed upon and commended 'discouragement of all cultural and scientific events except where these contribute towards the ending of apartheid or have no possible role in promoting it.'" The Resolution was seconded by Dr N. Richman and Professor R. Levy. Nine Members participated in the ensuing discussion. The Resolution was put to the vote and carried by a majority (72 to 4).

The Public Image of Psychiatry

The Collegiate Trainees Committee has recently been concerned about the apparently poor public image of psychiatry. At the Trainees Forum in January 1986, Dr Richard Smith from the *British Medical Journal* and Mr David Hencke of *The Guardian* were invited to present their images of psychiatry from the medical and lay media points of view. Anthony Clare, Professor of Psychological Medicine at St Bartholomew's Medical College, was invited to present the psychiatrists' image of themselves and the media.

Dr Smith quoted several studies which showed that medical students saw psychiatrists as weak, emotionally unstable, non-energetic and confused thinkers. These attitudes became more positive after psychiatric clerkship, though this effect did not last. Psychiatrists were seen as least advanced, least expanding and as having the lowest status in the profession in another study of medical students. He felt that the relationship between psychiatrists and non-psychiatrists was not very good. Dr Smith advised that the changes in attitudes could be brought about by random selection of medical students and better exposure to 'bread and butter' psychiatry rather than rare esoteric cases, by better liaison between psychiatry and other medical specialities and by reducing divisions within psychiatry itself.

David Hencke pointed out the dichotomy of exposure of psychiatry between the tabloids and the quality papers. The former portrayed psychiatrists as big softies who could be easily manipulated by any criminal wanting a 'cushy' life in a mental hospital. The quality papers appeared to see psychiatrists as empire-builders spending large sums of money.

The public was often unable to make any clear distinctions between mental handicap and mental illness. People felt that mentally ill patients were generally violent and should not be living near them. He warned of an enormous backlash secondary to the public's perception of poor community care.

Professor Clare questioned psychiatrists' obsession to

examine their image. He felt that the reasons for the poor image were two-fold. Firstly the public's expectations might be too high and psychiatrists might not be able to satisfy these. Secondly psychiatry was still an infant science and could not deliver all its promises. On the positive side, Professor Clare found psychiatry to be more interesting than other specialities and the proportion of medical students finding it so was encouraging and recruitment to psychiatry was not such a problem. The public image of psychiatry had had little effect on recruitment. But the poor image produced poorly informed legislators who in turn affected the practice of psychiatry. From the viewpoint of teaching, he felt that medical students should have more exposure to psychiatry in primary care and the psychological aspects of physical disease. He urged the College to take the lead in informing the public by appointing a Press Officer.

A lively discussion ensued. Dr Smith emphasised that psychiatrists should learn to beat the media at their own game by arguing well and promptly. Professor Clare stated that the image of psychiatry was not totally negative and that psychiatrists had to accept the combination of greatness and charlatanism projected upon them by the public that Freud was said to have and that they might have to struggle to persuade the public of its shortcomings. Dr Bewley, President of the College, pointed out that measurement of any change was difficult in less than three generations. Dr Birley, Dean of the College, added that the issues of stigma concerning mental illness were affecting the normalisation process in the community. Mr Hencke felt that psychiatric patients did not wish to come forward in the community because of this stigma. Professor Clare again stressed the need to communicate with other colleagues and for the College to have a clear voice rather than none or one which came too late.

DINESH BHUGRA
*(on behalf of the fourth
Collegiate Trainees Committee)*