

Editorials

THE ROYAL COLLEGE

AS WE announced briefly in our last issue we are now a Royal College. The College Council has been gratified by the large number of felicitous messages that have been received on this occasion. They came from all the other Royal Colleges, from medical institutions and innumerable individuals. Faith in our ideals has been demonstrated in a material way by the wonderful response to the president's request for fresh donations and covenants towards the appeal. These are most welcome for, like every active voluntary organization, the College is always aiming to do more than it has the money to accomplish. This is as it should be.

It must not be forgotten that this new title, so graciously bestowed on the College by Her Majesty The Queen, is a recognition of the years of untiring work of a large number of men and women devoted to the furtherance of general practice as an academic discipline. Four years after the inception of the National Health Service, when the College was founded, the future of general practice was grave indeed. There were few incentives to better work; money was scarce. Many doctors had had reductions in their income forced upon them without any foreseeable prospect of increase. The struggle at the time was for betterment. A few saw that if general practice was to survive it must establish for itself an academic centre where its skills could be fostered and where new ideas could be exchanged; a place where general practice and medicine in the context of general practice could be studied.

There is so much more than this. With the birth of the College, form and shape was given back to the main stream of medicine, medicine which had been fragmented by specialist technologies and administrative need. Once again we have a cohesive force working towards the humane and scientific objectives that medicine has always had before it, the primary care of the sick person.

That so much towards these aims has been achieved in the last 15 years has been recognized. We must now move forward. With increased dignity come increased responsibilities.

It is our task, now, as a Royal College, to look to the future with vision and insight. With our colleagues in the other specialties we must marry the oldest medical arts, our own, to the newest of

medical sciences that technology is bringing to life.

Of the founders, many still remain working willingly for their brain-child. It would be invidious to mention them by name. Fifteen years ago, most of them were in their forties—a time of life recognized as that in which the general practitioner is most productive in his professional work. These men have become old in the service of the College. Only too soon will they be laying down their burden for younger men to shoulder. In a world of ultrasonics, the laser beam and the digital computer, young men with a different approach to practice will be needed to reinforce their seniors, and 'ere long replace them. Is it one of the signs of age that the old cannot discern their successors? Perhaps it is. But are there in the College today, enough young men to carry on? Is the College in its search for the best, becoming too exclusive? Are the rewards of being a member of the College sufficiently satisfying to make the majority of general practitioners wish to be associated with it? It is no idle boast that the College has contributed to the continued survival of general practice. The College must ensure its continued virility by stimulating the interest and enlisting the material assistance of those who soon will succeed to its management.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR GENERAL PRACTICE

IT IS NOW over two years since the College published the first report on special vocational training for general practice. In this report the needs of general practice were set out firmly without special regard for the practicability of the recommendations that were made, in the belief that “ the future of general practice depends on the recognition of the needs for such a plan and its adoption as soon as possible and that many of the present ills will persist until this happens ”. Since then the Review Body has reported and a valiant attempt has been made to inject more incentives into the general practice of medicine outside hospitals. The report of the Working Party on Vocational Training for General Practice recently published by the Nuffield Provincial Trust bases its recommendations on these two previous reports and makes suggestions how the ideals of the College can be edged into regions of reality. The working party consider that the Review Body's recommendations on the