

FIRST SESSION

Adolescence and its problems

WELCOME

Dr W. H. Hylton, M.R.C.S., M.R.C.G.P. L.R.C.P., (*Provost of the South-west England Faculty*)

IT is my very pleasant duty to welcome you all to this symposium and to thank the speakers for coming here to address us on this very important topic. This subject which covers many disciplines is nobody's 'special pigeon' but it should be one of the special interests of general practice, the more so as medicine, and general practice in particular is, as the College motto suggests, a question of caring, and not just one of medical diagnosis and treatment. The College motto *Cum Scientia Caritas* has been freely translated as 'With tender loving care' but our tender, loving care must have a scientific basis.

Our thanks are specially due to Professor Hubble for coming here; we know that he chaired a working party of the World Health Organization on the problems of adolescence throughout the world and he has made a special study of it. To him along with our speakers, who are specialists in their own branches, both medical and lay, we extend a very hearty welcome. I must also thank Messrs Geigy who have not only been generous hosts, but have been responsible for organizing and arranging this symposium.

OPENING REMARKS

Professor D. V. Hubble, C.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.P. (*Professor of paediatrics and child health, dean of medical faculty, University of Birmingham*):

Let us begin by defining adolescence as a state of pre-maturity, and a state of transition of emergence between childhood and pre-adult maturity. We all recognize that the rate of maturation in any individual is different from the rate of maturation in other individuals. There is a wide scatter, a gaussian curve with a wide spread in the rate of maturation between one young person and another. Not only is there this difference between individuals but there is also an internal difference in the rate of maturation both in social and sexual behaviour and between the different systems of the body. This makes it impossible for us to give adolescence a really tidy definition. If you are regarding adolescents from the point of view of their state of sexual maturation, then this provides one description. If you are an educationalist you may say that a child is approaching maturity when he leaves school at the age of 16 or 18, but the social maturation of such individuals will have travelled at very different speeds. As we seek to describe adolescence, metaphors are useful to us in forming a total picture. We may talk about the 'plasticity' of adolescence, a particularly useful metaphor because it carries with it a suggestion of moulding. There are pressures on the adolescent and these pressures may come either from within or without, they may be endogenous or exogenous. We may change our metaphor again and describe adolescence as a state of suspension