

Editorials

IMPLEMENTING TODD

TO those who had not been following the trends of thought on medical education during the years preceding the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission on Medical Education in 1968, its findings came somewhat of a shock. That the student was faced with the need to assimilate far more knowledge than his predecessors of only a few years ago was acknowledged, but most people who had thought about the subject at all seemed to have believed all that was needed was that the content of the five years undergraduate course should be altered in some mysterious way so that the length of time spent on it need not be prolonged. Those who were embarking on specialist training already had many years ahead of them of being 'under training' before they would reach consultant rank. Todd's main conclusions, therefore, most affected the training of general practitioners. 'In our picture of pattern of medical services in Britain, all doctors—general practitioners as well as Consultants—will be specialists in particular aspects of medicine who will be equally regarded as such and will be fully trained for the work they undertake.' (The capital letter for consultants is as printed in the report.) But Todd was doing no more than spelling out the requirements that the College of General Practitioners had been striving for for some years and on the lines of which they had submitted evidence to the Royal Commission. The college believed and still believes that five years' vocational training is necessary to make a fully-fledged general practitioner. For the time being agreement has been arrived at with the General Medical Services Committee, representing the local medical committees of England and Wales, that three years will be the present objective. Two of these years shall, preferably, be spent in hospital; one in general practice. The report of the working party 'The future general practitioner,' published as "Report from general practice No. 14" and circulated with this journal, is in effect a progress report. It sets out to give guidance on how the postgraduate training of the trainee general practitioner may best be implemented. From this it is clear that although much has already been done there is still much more to do. With an annual intake of principals to general practice of round about a thousand a large number of trainees will be required if all those intending to make general practice a career are to receive the training which is due to them. At present there are no more than about 170 trainees in the trainee practitioners scheme and only about one in twenty of new entries is asking to take part in a three-year scheme (Horder 1971). This does not necessarily imply that those not embarking on a three-year scheme of training under some 'official' scheme are not, as many have always done in the past, undertaking training schemes of their own devising.

A report of the working party states that the responsibility for the appointment of teachers rests, in England and Wales, on the training scheme committees appointed by the local medical committees. Success depends, it says, on the willingness of the teachers to co-operate. Primarily success will depend on the number and quality of teachers willing to undertake this work. Teaching of trainees can be very rewarding; but it can also be irksome. The working party hint that though it is recognized that it is desirable to train young doctors in the best practices there is by no means agreement on what constitute the best practices. As with the consultant in hospital, isolated in his small empire, so with the general practitioner skills and personal preferences differ between partners even in a close knit organization. Long may it remain so. Teaching must be

so planned as to bring out the personality of the individual. He must never be led to think that organization is an end in itself. Whilst we know from our acquaintance with hospital medicine that good medicine can be practised in quite unfit surroundings, it is essential that a trainee should be allowed to work only in surroundings that are at least satisfactory and properly staffed.

The time will not be far distant when practitioners who have undertaken the full gamut of training and have achieved the distinction of membership of the Royal College will be seeking practice vacancies. It is necessary for the success of the scheme of training that these doctors be given due preference when partnership vacancies are being filled. We are at present training 'dedicated' doctors, we must ensure that they will not, at the end of their training, find that others less conscientious have beaten them in the race for full partnership in a general practice. The college journal can help in this respect. The classified advertisement columns are at the disposal of members seeking partners and assistants and could be used more frequently for this purpose.

REFERENCES

- The future general practitioner*, (the fourth report of a working party). Reports from general practice, No. 14. March 1971.
 Horder, J. P. (1971). Training for general practice. *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians*. London. 5, 187.

MISS IRENE SCAWN

AT the conclusion of the business of the publication committee held on Sunday, 13 December, Miss Scawn was presented with a silver fruit basket to mark the termination of her connection with the college Journal. In making the presentation the President said there was a time when the present Journal existed in the form of a type written foolscap sheet published by Dr Pinsent's office. Towards the end of 1953 the Research Committee took over the increasing number of tasks previously borne by Dr Pinsent alone. It was at that time Dr McConaghey took on the publication of the Committee's Research News Letter. The College did not know how fortunate it was when Miss Scawn agreed to help Dr McConaghey with this new task as she had done previously with other secretarial work. By her skill and business acumen there can be no doubt that Miss Scawn played a fundamental rôle in bringing the Journal to its present state of world renown. Whatever the future may hold it can be said with certainty that without Miss Scawn it would have had no past.

On behalf of the officers of Council, the administrative secretary, members of the Publications Committee and Editorial Board, and from the whole College, Dr Watson asked Miss Scawn to accept a very lovely piece of silver as a token of their admiration and gratitude for her inspired craftsmanship in helping to create the Journal of RCGP. He said that if she looked at it closely she would find no inscription—only the hallmark for 1835. It was hoped that with the inner eye she would read in this gift somewhere a far deeper message than any members could put into words. He added "We can only say thank you to you for sharing so many of your active years".

Miss Scawn, in reply, said she was overwhelmed. Whatever she had been able to do for the College and the Journal, she had done willingly and loved it. She had many happy memories which she would cherish and the silver would remind her of her term in the College always. She paid tribute to the work done by Drs Pinsent, Watson and Swift in the early days of the Journal: also to Dr Lawson who had a very difficult time in his first year as chairman of the Publications Committee. Her heartfelt thanks went to Mrs McConaghey for her patience over the years. In conclusion, she paid special tribute to Dr Hunt, to Mrs Phillips and to the secretariat at the College.