active figure in WONCA for several years, and who appropriately represents the country that made the greatest academic impact at this meeting.

It is also appropriate that the next and Ninth World Conference on Family Medicine will be held in the USA, with an American President, Dr E. Kowalwski presiding. It is certain that with the resources of such a large country and active support of the American Academy of Family Physicians, the next conference will mark a further development in world general practice.

JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

OBITUARY

Lord Platt, MD, M.SC, FRCP, FRCGP

THE College may be corporately as sad as any individual at the loss of a great friend. The sadness is the greater when the friend was also a great man of medicine. There will be many who will laud Robert Platt's achievements in many fields. We in our College must gratefully record our debts to him.

Lord Platt's interest in general practice began when he changed his job as a consultant physician in Sheffield to that of Professor of Medicine at Manchester. There he and his great colleague Lord Stopford were the prime movers in the creation of a university practice in the Darbishire House Health Centre, opened by the then Minister of Health, Ian McLeod, in March 1954.

In 1965, a year before he retired, he decided to do something more for general practice and instigated the creation of a part-time lectureship which led to the first chair of general practice in England in 1972. In this work he provided significant opportunities for general practice to advance academically and subscribed to one of the College's aims at its foundation.

His Rock Carling monograph written in 1963 paid great attention, and some tributes, to general practice. It later appeared that, in the many long and observant visits which he made to practices, he was, with typical prudence, surveying the field from which he intended to select his part-time lecturer.

Yet while promoting the College cause these activities were parochial. His help in the wider field of the College was formidable, and recognized by his acceptance of an Honorary Fellowship in 1963. He was further recognized by his country when he was made a Life Peer in 1967.

It was in 1965 that he wrote in a foreword to the College/NBA Design Guide: "At this time of reappraisal and new opportunity in general practice there is this substantial body of general practitioners who believe that their future lies not in further shedding of their work on to the hospitals but in the thorough reorganization of their service".

He quickly showed that this was no idle comment. He was immediately influential in establishing the legitimacy of research in general practice. He supported the theory that research needs a laboratory but not always a bench. He was the chairman of a committee which sponsored Keith Hodgkin's work from which came *Towards Earlier Diagnosis* (1973). It was his recognition of its importance and his powerful promotion that led the Medical Research Council to fund the College Oral Contraceptive Study, a study which established at once the possibility and value of large-scale clinical studies from general practice.

His views on much of contemporary research were epitomized in his Harveian Oration (1967) when he warned against the dangers of medical research into "the trivial, the irrelevant and the obvious". He never wavered in his support of the relevance of well conducted general-practitioner studies.

Clad in his maroon dinner jacket he was a familiar and welcome figure at College dinners, a repeated evidence of his feeling of belonging.

Twelve years ago he anticipated the changing role of general practice and the need for training. "The general practitioner," he told his new part-time lecturer at Manchester, "should become the new general physician. See that he is trained accordingly." One might readily accept that good general medicine is the foundation of good general practice, yet this belief is not always demonstrated in the provision of hospital posts for training.

We shall miss Robert Platt—that cultured man whose music room, large though it was, seemed dwarfed by two grand pianos and a platoon of 'cellos, servants of his major hobby. He will always be remembered by our College which he favoured with help, and graced with his fellowship.

P. S. BYRNE

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