

NEWS AND VIEWS

LIVING WITH BIG BROTHER



The organizing committee for the Spring Meeting. (See panel, p. 342.)

Spring in Leicester—the hosts' view

The Leicester Faculty accepted the invitation to mount the Spring Meeting of the College in 1984 for two main reasons. Firstly we had our own Big Brother in Daniel Lambert, who was a jailer at Leicester prison in 1800, and secondly, the new Medical School was ready to show off its unique undergraduate curriculum and teaching style.

FRIDAY afternoon was devoted to the achievements and challenges of the Department of General Practice originally set up by Marshall Marinker, and now headed by Robin Fraser. The first blows to any RCGP complacency were punched out in this session. Members of the College had been lazier in responding to a prescribing 'quality of care' survey in Leicestershire and Lincolnshire, although there had been a 100 per cent response from trainers. Colin Tory—Manager of Audiovisual Services at the University of Leicester presented a 'best buy' and a 'dos and don'ts when video recording' session. I understand now why my microphone gave such poor results. Janet Gale's catalogue of 'distance learning' techniques using all sorts of tapes, television and telephone facilities, groups, *multicentres* and *solo learning* opportunities means that there is now something to suit everyone. Could the postgraduate centre become as obso-

lete as the cinema? Sandy Maçara's 'Keynote address' picking up the theme of 'Big Brother is watching you' and quoting freely from George Orwell's book *1984*, was a *tour de force*. His eloquence and pulpit expertise were rewarded with prolonged applause. 'Follow that,' one might have thought, and believe it or not, the speakers did. One provost from the South wrote, 'I do not believe that I have been to a meeting when such a standard was maintained throughout'.

World concepts of medicine by John Loraine and Alfredo Jadresic made our problems in the UK seem trivial. You could have heard a pin drop as Dr Jadresic retold his life experiences in Chile—of the slaughter and the torture and the life saving influence of organizations like Amnesty International.

John Ball, introduced by our own medico-political heavyweight Brian Whowell, rose above the recent misunderstandings on the 'deputizing issue'

and gave a wide ranging assessment of 'the changes in the delivery of health care in the UK.'

In contrast, in the other theatre, Professor Jack Spence of the University of Leicester and Mr Allen Chinnery of the Leicestershire Museums Art Gallery and Records Service told us something completely different about the political predictions of George Orwell and the wider aspects of Daniel Lambert and his world.

The delegates were checked on computer lists before joining the queue for a 'prison style' lunch using trays similar to those in daily use at Leicester Prison. It was a very good meal—the prison catering officer has to manage to feed the prisoners on only 79p per prisoner per day.

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Michael Sheldon delivered the second blow to our self-esteem in the afternoon. With the help of actors, he made us rethink the need to go on sitting at morning and evening surgery and warned of the dangers of micro-computers in general practice. 'Follow that', and Bill Dolman did with his 'Working with the media'. Very helpful advice and witty anecdotes—did you hear his definition of loving? (A loving doctor is one who stays up all night with a sick child or stays up all night with a fit adult.) It seems that over a third of the delegates had been involved in local radio or TV interviews. Robin McCron and Lindsay Knight did a triumphant double act to end using some most uncomfortable extracts from Channel 4's *Well Being* series. The self help group describing how they were able to examine each other's cervixes was another body blow to the medical establishment.

The Speakers' Corner section on Saturday afternoon allowed audience participation to a greater degree and was a success. Could this become a regular feature of Spring Meetings? Our recurrent nightmare that one or more of the speakers would fail to arrive was not realized and all the complex audiovisual effects worked on cue thanks to Mr Crisp and his team.

The social events were well supported and self financing, and the cabaret flew up in time to perform at the Faculty Banquet. The timing of 'Instant Sunshine', a mainly medical quartet, was exactly right providing a fitting

Organizing committee

Dr Arthur Watts, *Provost*
 Dr Michael Crowe, *Chairman*
 Dr Elan Preston-Whyte, *Vice Chairman*
 Dr David Parkes-Bowen, *Treasurer*
 Dr Keith Evans, *Hon Secretary*
 Prof. Robin Fraser, *Academic programme*
 Dr Ken Brown, *Exhibitions and Sponsors*
 Dr Tony Jarvis, *Exhibitions and Sponsors*
 Dr Justin Allen, *Speakers Corner*
 Dr Tom Hailstone, *Audio-Visual*
 Dr Leslie Lewis, *Transport*
 Dr Roy Aitken; Dr D. T. Hewat-Jaboor; Dr David Hurwood; Dr Richard Taylor; Dr Martin Vaughan; Dr Brian Whowell; Dr Judith Millac; Dr A. P. K. John; Dr Elisabeth Eaton.

Co-opted to Social Committee:
 Dr Valerie Corbett; Mr Robin Preston-Whyte; Mrs Sheila Parkes-Bowen; Mrs Jeanette Lewis; Mrs Audrey Crowe.

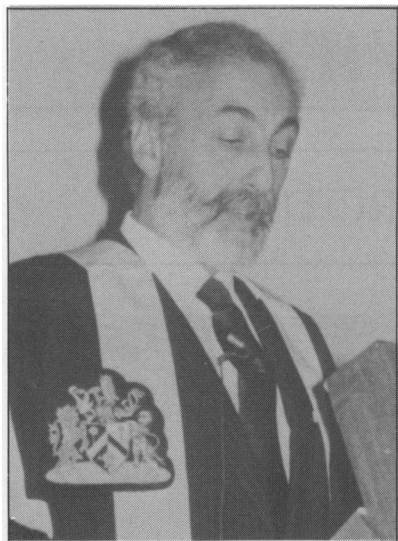


Photo: Dan Crowley

Professor Jack Norell delivers the William Pickles Lecture.

climax to the Faculty programme.

After an impressive robed Spring General Meeting in the Queen's Hall

on Sunday morning, Dr Jack Norell, ex-Dean of Studies delivered a knock-out William Pickles Lecture with the recurring theme 'what every doctor knows'. The sacred cows of vocational training and the College exam were put under the magnifying glass and found wanting. The text will be printed in the *Journal* and should be obligatory reading. Much of what he said is what every doctor knows, but has not had the courage to say.

If the weekend was really the success we are told it was, then the credit must go equally to the forty or so local members and their spouses, and the many sponsors in particular the Wellcome Foundation and all the staff who catered for us at all the different functions. We hope to have made a small profit after paying our excellent speakers and so on and wish the Essex Faculty every success in their plans for next year at Cambridge.

M. CROWE

Chairman of the organizing committee

Spring in Leicester—a personal view

It is impossible for one reviewer to adequately cover a College Spring Meeting—there is so much going on! Some five hundred doctors and their spouses attended the meeting at Leicester from 6 to 8 April. The academic programme was varied with difficult choices to be made between the different speakers and activities after mid-morning on Saturday.

THE Friday afternoon programme was for all delegates. A welcome from the Leicester Faculty Provost Dr Arthur Watts set the scene for a fascinating programme presented by the Leicester University Department of General Practice. Professor Robin Fraser presented his results of a feasibility study examining some facts and figures obtained on a voluntary basis from general practitioners in Leicestershire and Lincolnshire. A 76 per cent response rate was obtained, which was further broken down to 100 per cent response rate from training practices but only 63 per cent from ourselves, that is fellows and members of the College. 'Not only are we cunning but also lazy', said Professor Fraser; one of many pieces of dry Scottish humour which much enlivened his talk.

Dr Colin Tory gave a helpful talk on the choice of videorecording systems for use in the surgery and expertly demonstrated—with audiovisual aids of course—the importance of good sound quality and the elimination of background noise, so vital in general practice consultations when silence may be an important cue.

When we had seen how to use the technology Dr Brian McAvoy, Senior

Lecturer in General Practice, demonstrated its use in undergraduate teaching of skills needed in consultations.

Dr Janet Gale, Lecturer in Educational Technology at the Open University, concluded the afternoon by looking at the use of technology in postgraduate education. She has previously written in *News and Views* about 'Topics in Drug Therapy' (April *Journal*, p. 243) but it was interesting to hear of advances in telecommunications such as 'Conference 2,000' used at the Welsh National School of Medicine for teaching obstetrics to undergraduates at different peripheral hospitals. Cable television and computers would produce exciting possibilities in the near future.

A welcome by the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Professor Robert Kilpatrick, on Saturday morning included a brief history of the development of the new Medical School over the past ten years and the important and exciting exposure to general practice given to students throughout their undergraduate course.

The 'Keynote Address' by Dr Alexander Macara looked at the influence of 'Big Brother' at many levels, international and national, within the media