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THE ROYAL MEDICO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

AUTUMN QUARTERLY MEETING

Papers and Discussion

THE FUTURE OF ORGANIZED PSYCHIATRY

THE PRESIDENT: The main item before us is the discussion on "The Future of Organized Psychiatry in Great Britain and Ireland". The agenda is before you and you will see that there is to be a motion submitted by Dr. Howells and an amendment submitted by Dr. Walk. This discussion has been organized by the Papers and Discussions Committee, and Dr. Howells and the main speakers have been allotted twenty minutes each for their addresses, should you agree. Then there will be discussions and I will ask those who join in not to exceed five minutes each. I will then call upon the main speakers to reply briefly. It might be convenient, if Dr. Howells agrees, for him to propose his motion at that time. After that we will ask Dr. Walk to propose his amendment, and we shall then take a vote.

The Case for Establishing a College of Psychiatrists

DR. J. G. HOWELLS

We can have our College now—by rejecting the amendment and voting for the motion.

We can have our College now—history asks for it—as we shall see.

At first, the sick were cared for by any who would, but with knowledge came specialization and three early claimants in the field—physician, surgeon and apothecary. In 1518 the College of Physicians was founded, but licensed only to practise within seven miles of London; indeed it was only able to extend its area to England, and England alone, by the Royal College of Physicians Act of 1960. Although known as "The Royal College of Physicians" since 1518, it had no legal authority to this name until its Act of 1960. In 1540 the United Company of Barber-Surgeons was founded and by the Physicians Act of the same year the physicians claimed surgery and indeed did not abandon their claim until 400 years later, when the Medical Act of 1956 was passed. The battle between physician and surgeon went on until 1800 when, by a piece of opportunism, the Company of Surgeons became the Royal College of Surgeons. In 1617, the Apothecaries Society had been founded. In 1850 it was proposed that a "Royal College of General Practitioners" should be formed. In fact the general practitioner had to wait yet another hundred years, primarily because of the opposition of the Royal College of Surgeons, until 1952, before achieving the College of General Practitioners.

With increased knowledge came increasing specialization, and in 1929 the Obstetricians and the Gynaecologists formed their own College, again in the teeth of opposition from the two existing Colleges. In 1962, the pathologists formed the College of Pathologists, in the face of opposition from the Royal College of Physicians. (At this point, I must digress to acknowledge the invaluable help of Dr. J. M. Moylett in starting my research in the history of the Colleges.)

And what of Psychiatry? Psychiatry had become a specialty a long time ago. In 1841 psychiatrists formed the "Association of Medical Officers of Hospitals for the Insane". In 1865 this became "The Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland", and in 1926 it was granted a splendid Royal Charter and became "The Royal Medico-Psychological Association". Psychiatry is now poised, awaiting its metamorphosis into a College. It virtually has as many specialists as medicine and surgery and twice as many as obstetrics and gynaecology. It has its own circumscribed experiences and skills and links with all the other specialties in medicine.

We can have our College now—and with it, equal opportunities. What opportunities?

The first of these is the need to have our professional body represented on all those important medical and professional bodies where the interests of psychiatry, psychiatrists, and our patients, need expression. Let us not forget that we, and we alone, speak for our patients. A most important body is the Joint Consul-

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