MIDLAND DIVISION

The Midland Division, comprising a geographical area covered by the erstwhile Sheffield and Birmingham Regional Hospital Boards, has from the beginning of our College had to grapple with the problem of its size. It was decided at an early stage to hold meetings in rotation throughout the Division, rather than confine ourselves to major centres. To date, Divisional meetings have been held at Sheffield, Leicester, Nottingham, Birmingham, Coventry and Lincoln. The well-travelled Executive Committee have in addition strayed as far as Shrewsbury.

From the outset our Division has aimed at fostering psychiatric interest. This applies to both encouragement of local participation and to the recognition of special interests within the Division. The trainees have set up their own forum and have elected two of their number to represent their interests on the Executive Committee. They have also elected representatives to serve on the Working Party of Trainees. We have been very much aware of the predominance of senior colleagues at College meetings, and aim to rectify this imbalance.

Child psychiatry is well represented, and a Working Party has been set up to consider the formation of a Divisional Section for this specialty. Psychotherapy is another area in which those with special interests have come together to share their experiences, for example in setting up training programmes in psychotherapy. In several areas of the Division postgraduate schemes are already in existence, and we hope that our College will provide a framework for co-ordination at divisional level.

It is generally felt that there is a wealth of postgraduate facilities in the Midlands, and that sufficient teaching, courses, etc. are provided locally to obviate the need for pilgrimages to London. (For those who wish to visit ivory towers, they too may be sought out in this part of the country and travelling expenses avoided.)

Since there are four medical schools within the frontiers of the Division, each with its University Department of Psychiatry, there is more than adequate provision of postgraduate teaching and training for our trainees. Courses directed at the M.R.C.Psych. are jointly mounted by university staff and N.H.S. consultants and clinical tutors at Sheffield, Birmingham and Nottingham. With such academic enrichment, the content of Divisional meetings at once posed problems in planning. This has been hotly debated at more than one Executive as well as at full Divisional meetings. It has been agreed that some equilibrium should prevail, and that each Divisional meeting should not be unduly weighted in favour of clinical/academic interest on the one hand or administrative/medico-political on the other. With this balance in view topics have comprised D.G.H. Units, role of the psychologist, accreditation, psychotherapy and, in the near future, security units.

With such a geographically unwieldy Division, a very large membership and only two meetings each year, much of the administration devolves on the Executive Committee. This meets quarterly, and on it are represented not only a cross-section of members from widespread parts of the Division, but also two trainees. Sub-specialties are also represented, e.g. child psychiatry and mental handicap. Soon after the Divisional structure of our College was developed, the Division decided that clear paths of communication from the centre to the periphery were essential. Similarly, local opinion and views must gain access to H.Q. in London with minimal links in the chain. Accordingly, it was thought appropriate to have our Chairman and Representative Fellow on Council identified as one and the same person. In the same way the Secretary of the Division is also the Representative Member on Council. We feel that this arrangement has worked well and has maintained information flow.

One topic which has been aired and which may have stimulated discussion in other parts of the country relates to the derisory £50 expenses allowance allocated to each Division. This certainly restricts the number of guest speakers who can be invited from afar to meetings. In fact, in these days of inflation this princely annual sum could evaporate half way through a meeting! Notwithstanding the financial or even other advantages of having 'local talent' perform at Divisional meetings, it would be reassuring to be able to invite suitable participants from other Divisions, and know that their expenses can be met.

It has been brought to this Division's attention that our College invites nominations for Fellowship. Questions have been asked about the criteria to be fulfilled and answers have evoked more questions (usually more humorous than the first set), and the discussion has usually ended in an abundance of wit, cynicism and good-natured guffaws. One thing seems to be certain, nevertheless, and that is the increased value to the College of a Fellow, compared with his lower-subscribing Member colleagues. A recent light-hearted debate on this topic of profound importance ended with someone musing 'For who's a jolly good Fellow?'

EDWARD GORDON,
Hon. Secretary.

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