PARLIAMENTARY NEWS October–December 1973

(as reported to the Public Policy Committee)

Debates

The debate on the reorganization of the *National Health Service* on 11 December brought to light a number of difficulties and anomalies, but there was no mention of those affecting psychiatric hospitals.

On 9 November there was an extensive debate on the Adoption of Children, which should be read by all concerned with child health and welfare, although again nothing specifically psychiatric emerged. The debate arose from the publication of the Houghton Committee's Report (Cmnd 5107).

Mental Health Services

It was stated that 'expenditure in England on services primarily concerned with mental health accounts for 13 per cent of the total resources devoted to the health and personal social services programme'. However, under the 'Stage 3' proposals local authority projects to the value of £0·5 million would have to be deferred. (Other deferments will, of course result from the December mini-budget.) A forthcoming circular to local authorities will re-emphasize the importance of close relations between social service and health departments and of the 'team approach'.

Questions were asked about the numbers of suicides at Broadmoor (between 1 and 4 in each of the last 5 years), and about the numbers of patients discharged from Broadmoor who subsequently committed offences (84 discharged in the last 3 years, of whom 21 committed offences, including 2 homicides).

It was alleged in a question that some hospitals kept black lists of former patients whom they would not re-admit except on a compulsory order, but Sir Keith Joseph was 'not aware of any such lists'.

The work of the Hospital Advisory Service has been temporarily curtailed to ease the pressure on hospital staffs during the N.H.S. reorganization.

Mental Handicap

As for the Mental Health Services generally, anxiety has been expressed about the deferment of local authority projects, and reference was made particularly to the recent 'Mind' Survey of Community Care Provisions.

The Secretary for State for Scotland was urged to implement the recommendations of the Melville Report on staff training. Two of these are likely to be the subject of a Private Member's Bill.

The accidental death of a patient at Lea Castle Hospital was attributed to shortage of nursing staff, which it was said was now being remedied.

In reply to a question it was stated that no relationship had been found between fluoride level in water and the incidence of mongolism. Another question related to marriages between patients in subnormality hospitals, on which 'information was not available'.

Children

Numerous questions, including many detailed suggestions for action, have related to the problems of *child abuse* and 'battered babies'. Those by Mr. J. Ashley on 22 November were expecially constructive and were welcomed by Sir Keith Joseph, who said that he would be issuing further guidance to those concerned early in the new year and would not rule out the possibility of seeking further powers to ensure the safety of young children.

The number of *autistic children* in England and Wales is in the region of 1,800.

Alcoholism

A list of 18 specialized units providing 387 beds was given on 17 October. Admissions for alcoholism or alcoholic psychosis were nearly 11,000 in 1972. Proposals had been outlined for the expansion of community services for alcoholics.

Voting rights of mental patients

In a letter to the Prime Minister, the Speaker, as Chairman of the Conference on Electoral Law, has submitted a recommendation that patients in mental hospitals should be placed on the same footing as those in general hospitals. Arrangements to implement the recommendation should be considered by a special Working Party.

ALEXANDER WALK.

THE REGIONAL DIVISIONS

North East Division: Newsletter No. 1

The Divisional Executive Committee was formed in mid-November 1972, and met for the first time at Newcastle at the end of the same month. At this and a subsequent meeting at York the major share of the discussion was devoted to the role and functions of a Regional Division. Although well established features of the former R.M.P.A. practice should clearly be retained as a basis, there is urgent need for Divisions of the College to adopt new functions and machinery

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to cope with a whole series of changes affecting the profession.

It is already apparent that there will be a considerable extension of our executive and consultative commitments, and greater involvement in the general and educational work of the College. Among the immediate issues are: the evaluation of the Clinical Tutor system, liaison with Specialist Sections, nomination of advisers on various official N.H.S. and other statutory committees, and cooperation in certain aspects on postgraduate training. We are also contributing to the next stage of the College's accreditation exercise for general professional training in psychiatry, while at a later date fund-raising activities may well appear on the agenda.

The Executive Committee feels that it is vital to keep members informed about these complex developments, and it is hoped that this aim will be met in part by an occasional Divisional Newsletter. Comments or enquiries about the items summarized below are welcome, and should be addressed to the Secretary, or to any Committee Member.

Executive Committee

The elected membership was listed in *News and Notes* for January 1973. Only one valid nomination for officers and members was submitted from the Leeds Regional Board area before the ballot date. In order to improve the balance of representation, Dr. S. B. Mahapatra, Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry, University of Leeds, has been invited to fill the one vacancy, and in addition our Divisional Representatives, Dr. W. A. L. Bowen of Naburn and Bootham Park Hospitals, and Dr. J. M. Roberts, of Leeds University Psychiatric Unit, have also agreed to serve as co-opted members. There has been good response to a decision to invite nominations for trainee representatives to join the Committee, and a postal ballot will be organized shortly.

For the time being, the plan is to hold meetings quarterly, in rotation at Newcastle upon Tyne, York, Leeds and Darlington.

The Council of the College has decided that the next elections for Divisional Executive Committees will be held in 1974.

Divisional Meetings

Two of these will be held each year, one in each N.H.S. Region, taking the form of day meetings at psychiatric hospitals and units. The inaugural meeting took place at St. Luke's Hospital, Middlesbrough, on 21 June 1973. The morning session was devoted to an open discussion on 'Functions and Future Aims of the Regional Division' and papers on clinical, research and organizational topics were presented during the afternoon. Drs. H. Richardson, and S. B. Mahapatra have been appointed Joint Programme Secretaries for the first year.

Nominations and Representatives

Dr. J. Blackburn was our representative at the Royal College meeting on 27 March, on 'Providing a Comprehensive District Psychiatric Service for the Adult Mentally Ill'. Dr. H. Richardson acts as the North East Regional representative in the National Association of Clinical Tutors, and has also recently been elected Chairman of the College's Sub-Committee of Clinical Tutors.

Council has invited nominations for one trainee and an alternate from each Regional Board Area to serve on a Working Party of Trainees. Drs. C. F. Fleming (Leeds) and J. A. Mullaney (Newcastle) have agreed to serve as trainees, while Drs. S. H. Shaw and S. Bhate have accepted nominations as the respective alternates.

Vocational Training for Psychiatry (Newcastle Region)

In response to a request from the Sub-Committee on Vocational Training for Psychiatry, Regional Postgraduate Institute, nominees were invited to attend relevant Sub-Committee meetings as spokesmen in the psychiatric Sub-specialties. Members who have so far accepted this advisory commitment include Dr. K. A. Day (Subnormality), Dr. W. Brough (Psychotherapy), Dr. D. G. A. Westbury (Forensic Psychiatry) and Dr. G. Blessed (Psychogeriatrics).

Postgraduate Training

In common with other areas in the United Kingdom, the distribution of trainee posts within the Division is marked by a striking disparity in the overall Registrar/Senior Registrar ratio, complicated by unequal distribution of both grades between hospitals, and between sub-specialties. While some of the remedies will be matters of interest to the Regional Manpower Committees, our Executive Committee concludes that little is known about the effects of emigration, repatriation, research commitments and service needs, and further feels that there is no access to formal data on staffing ratios, distribution, or promotion prospects within the Division.

As a first step, Dr. J. S. Price and the Secretary are collaborating in a ten-year retrospective survey of trainee posts within the division, with the aim of determining trends in their establishment, distribution and outcome.

ALAN STEPHENS,
Honorary Secretary.

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East Anglian Division

The East Anglian Division met at Claybury Hospital on 4 October 1973; the aim of the meeting was to show how the 'Therapeutic Community' concept works out in a large psychiatric hospital.

In the morning Dr. Jennifer Picton-Jones chaired a discussion in which Dr. John Pippard, S.N.O. Eric Prior, and two psychiatric registrars, Dr. Mary Tomlinson and Dr. Michael Maloney, gave their versions of what Claybury was, what it had become since the middle 1950s, and what working in a therapeutic community had meant for each of them.

During the afternoon over sixty members of the Division joined a variety of patient, patient and staff, and staff groups before returning for a final discussion of the many difficulties involved in this pattern of work.

Irish Division

Elections

At the meeting of the Division on 30 November 1973, elections for representatives to Council took place. Drs. E. Casement and Mary Sullivan and Prof. J. N. P. Moore asked not to be considered for re-election. The results of the election were as follows:

Fellows: Dr. D. G. McGrath
(alternate Professor T. Lynch)
Dr. W. O. McCormick
(alternate Dr. A. S. Clenaghan)

Members: Dr. W. A. G. McCallum
(alternate Dr. W. B. McConnell)
Dr. V. T. Greene
(alternate Dr. D. J. Bradley)

The Honorary Secretary, Dr. W. O. McCormick, had submitted his resignation and Dr. V. T. Greene was elected acting Secretary.

Nursing matters

The Division considered the report of its study group which had been set up to consider the Report of the Working Party to the Minister of Health in the Republic of Ireland about Psychiatric Nursing Services. Following the meeting the Division approved the following statement:

'The Irish Division of the Royal College of Psychiatrists wish to point out that serious nursing problems exist in the psychiatric services of Health Boards in the Republic of Ireland. These problems are depriving numerous patients of forms of psychiatric treatment and practice which would benefit them.

'These problems could be solved both by the broad implementation of the recommendations of the Report of the Working Party on Psychiatric Nursing Services published in November 1972, and by the immediate recognition of certain particular problems pointed up by the Report. These include the fact that the day-on day-off system of duty rostering is detrimental to patient care, that promotion by merit is essential if the service and standard of care to patients is to develop, and that integration of male and female staff (and of male and female patients in their day areas) is beneficial and should occur.

'An appeal is made to the Minister of Health, to Health Boards, to all nursing organizations, associations and trade unions and to all individuals involved in these problems to see to their rapid resolution.'

Future meetings

There will be a meeting in May sponsored jointly by the Child Psychiatry and Mental Deficiency Sections of the Division to present topics of interest to the general psychiatrist.

COMMUNITY CARE PROVISIONS FOR MENTALLY ILL AND MENTALLY HANDICAPPED ADULTS

By Dr. Donal Early, *Consultant Psychiatrist, Glenside Hospital, Bristol*

The National Association for Mental Health has done a great service to psychiatry in carrying out a two-year follow-up survey to assess progress in the provision of community facilities by Local Authorities from 1971 (1, 2) to 1973 (3) The results in 1971 were 'alarming', the follow-up causes 'grave concern'.

Questionnaires were sent to all 173 Local Authorities in England and Wales: 140 replies were received. It was possible to compare 1971 and 1973 figures in 124 cases:

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