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Editorial

Abstract

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The Society has not yet realised what kind of bargain it has made. It has not been able to adjust its thinking to this new state of its affairs. Like the man in the street who suddenly wins a lot of money we do not know what to do with it. A large proportion, of course, must be set aside for the building of our new and much needed premises, but after this deduction, the Society still remains possessed of a considerable sum. The last editorial on this page spoke about the Society's position "at the crossroads" of the future. We are still dithering indecisively in the middle of the road.

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EDITORIAL

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Now is the time for the Society to lay the foundation of what it hopes to become. It can use its assets to expand, to enlarge the concept of a student medical society, unique in being autonomous and independent, or it can remain within its present limited construction. If we use our wealth to provide a solid basis for the Society for the next 100 or 200 years, then we can crystallise into a society serving every medical student, with each student playing an equal part in the running of the Society. The most successful society in this sense or in a sociological context, is one in which each member plays a part and has a sense of belonging. Many of our members do not feel integrated into the Society — and non members still describe it as a 'clique' of pompous people; to now be a wealthy clique makes the crime worse in their eyes. Some people are merely frightened of joining the Society because of its image. It is becoming therefore increasingly necessary to make the Society inclusive of every medical student; we believe that it benefits the student and certainly each additional member of the Society makes us a more interesting and potent body.

So how are we to widen the Society's sphere? The cumbersome constitutional apparatus of the Society should be examined and may have to be reformed. Present students feel that the machinery for administering the Society is heavy and ponderous, with its provisions for eligibility to vote in elections, the pre-set form of such elections and the vast numbers of office bearers. There is a lack of communication between those who administer the Society and those who merely belong to it. Attempts to communicate are made two or three times a year in business meetings. They are poorly attended, which is not wholly inexplicable. Much of the time is occupied by argument, esoteric and fierce, between older members, about abstruse points of constitution or law. Younger members find it boring and frustrating, when the main aims of the meeting are concealed by a cloud of pedantic dust.

It is hopeful that the next generation of office bearers have no connection with the Society as it existed in Melbourne Place. In its change of home the character of the Society has inevitably changed, and will continue to. Those of us who had any connection with the old society and the members of the old society find it difficult to accept what is patently happening to it now. It is evolving. The next generations of members are not hampered by a memory of what used to be grand and formal. They only know the Society as it is now, and are looking at the future rather than on the past.

Present members may be able to alter the constitutional and administration structure of the Society. An elected committee is still the most practical way of running the Society but the conveners could be pruned and one president is adequate. Perhaps we will reach the stage of having ordinary members taking the chair at meetings. The essential axis of the Society has always been and surely should remain the opportunity to put forward, and to defend, one's ideas in discussion with one's peers. This was implicit in the Society's foundation and has always been its main purpose. Long may it continue so. But let us clear away the dead wood which has accumulated around this theme. One aim should be a twentieth century Society.