

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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THE Secretary's Report has given some indication, how manifold and complex the activities of the Academy have become. The amount of work to be done, and of responsibility to be assumed, is very much greater than may appear on the surface. The work is done, and the responsibility assumed, to an appreciable extent by the Committees of the Council and to a very large extent by our Secretary and his staff. A newcomer to the Presidency may well wonder what part he can personally play. He may perhaps envy his predecessors, who had the pleasure and excitement of creating the brave new world which he now complacently inherits. So great has been the achievement of his predecessors in the past twenty years, that a limit seems to have been reached. It is not immediately obvious what else we can do, except to await and applaud the natural growth of the new organism created between 1950 and the present time. Let us nevertheless reconsider for a moment not only what the Academy is doing but also what else it might be doing.

As for what it is doing, bewildering as the complexity of detail may seem when you first confront it at close quarters, the outlines are quite clear. The four main pillars of the Academy are the overseas Schools and Institutes, the Research Grants, international visits and exchanges, and fourthly our publications. I mention also a fifth feature, not a main pillar but still an important part of the structure—Academy lectures. I have been impressed this year by the size and enthusiasm of the audiences. We have, perhaps, enough lectures; but while the hall remains full, and over-full, let no one say that we have too many, or that we are not supplying an eager demand.

Now, first, a word about the Schools and Institutes. The question for me at the moment is not what are we doing, but what else we might be doing. As you know, most of the Schools and Institutes are older than the Academy's connection with them, and all are independent of the Academy's control except inasmuch as they are financially dependent on and accountable to the Academy. In this area, the scope for innovation lies not in our relation to present Schools, but in taking the initiative about new foundations. The precedent was set twelve years ago

in the foundation of the Institute in Eastern Africa; Iran and Libya have followed since. This year sees the foundation of another Institute, in Afghanistan; and the Council of the Academy is about to consider yet another enterprise, an Institute in South East Asia. This is a more than usually adventurous project, and there are likely to be difficulties. We have still to define just what the interests and activities of an Institute in that complex area should be, and in the light of that definition we have to decide just where an Institute should be located within the countries concerned. In principle, I think we ought always to be sympathetic to ventures of this kind. Nobody can question the value and the success of our present Schools and Institutes, from the oldest at Athens and Rome and Jerusalem, through the middle-aged in Turkey and Iraq, to the relatively young in Persia and East Africa and Libya. Their virtues should inspire us to pay them the compliment of imitation wherever conditions seem appropriate; this may well be one of the most important contributions which the Academy can make, both to scholarship and to international relations.

Secondly, the Research Grants. The first class of these, the expenditure on Major Academy Projects, offers an obvious area for expansion, and in the present year we have made four additions to the list. So again we can claim to be on the move; and indeed there is more danger of too much than too little movement.

Our list of grants from the Research Fund this summer records a hundred projects, and the total is £88,000. But this total includes £33,000 assigned to nine major projects, leaving £55,000 for distribution among ninety-one applicants from all over the United Kingdom in a great variety of subjects. This latter part of our work, the practical encouragement of a large number of scholars, younger and older, is one to which I attach particular importance. It is a unique and irreplaceable service to a wide area of academic life in our country. We must be careful to see that a proper balance is preserved between expenditure on a few major projects and that on a larger number of smaller enterprises. It is tenable that, with present resources, the share of the major projects ought not to be allowed to grow larger than it is today. It was indeed a great day in the history of our Academy, when the first regular Government grant for research in the humanities was instituted in 1962. My general impression, based on a single year's experience, is that supply and demand are at the moment in good balance. Nothing

which we were keen to support went unassisted, and there was room for investment in the promise of younger scholars. The money seemed just enough to do the job properly, with nothing to spare; and that is as it should be.

For the future, we foresee one specially difficult problem: how to deal with applications for money in support of publications. It has been our policy in the past to look askance upon such applications; we have been reluctant to indulge in what might appear to be subvention of a publisher, perhaps merely to effect a relatively small reduction in the price of a book. Hitherto this has surely been a wise policy; but recently, and especially in the last year or two, the costs of printing and publishing have risen so fast and so high that the conditions are fundamentally changed. Most of us know, in our own circles, examples in which it is no longer a question of paying a subsidy to keep the price down or to guarantee Academy interest and approval; it is a question of paying a very substantial contribution towards the cost of publication, or the book will not be published. If this affects, as it does in my University, the work of scholars of established reputation and achievement, consider how dark is the outlook for younger scholars whose claims may be more easily set aside. I have an uneasy feeling that scholarship in the humanities faces something of a crisis in the near future in this matter of publication. The magnitude of the problem is such that it is not easy to see how the Academy can do more at present than rescue a few victims of a widespread calamity; but I say no more now, for the matter is already being studied by a Committee of the Council, and we shall hear more of it in the coming year.

About the third pillar, international visits and exchanges, I am left with little to say. This year, even the most ambitious innovator or expansionist would have found that the greatness which he wished to achieve was thrust upon him. First comes Mr. Rippon with his £25,000 rising to £50,000 in three or four years' time. Then, only a couple of weeks ago, Lord Murray writes to offer an increase in the number of Leverhulme Visiting Fellowships, up to seven, with a budget of £10,000. I am sure that you will wish me to thank the Leverhulme Trustees most warmly for this further example of their generosity and their goodwill to the Academy. The best way of returning their favour is to make good use of the opportunity which they have given us; do not be shy of proposing yourself or a colleague for these awards.

Expansion in this field is pleasant to record; but let no one imagine that no more is required than to receive a cheque and say thank you. The increase in our activities means a great increase of work, much of it demanding high professional expertise. It is right that the Academy should acknowledge a special debt of gratitude to Professor Dickens and the Overseas Policy Committee. And I should like also to thank, on your behalf, the retiring Director of the British Council, Sir John Henniker, for the invaluable assistance of his Council, especially in regard to Eastern Europe and Japan.

So we expand our overseas Institutes, our Major Projects, our International relations, and our publications. The basis of expansion is finance; and I welcome this opportunity to express our most cordial thanks to Mrs. Thatcher and her Department, both for the understanding and courtesy with which our needs are invariably considered, and for the response which the Department has made to our requests. Our grant for the coming year is, as you have been told, £467,000; in 1949 it was £2,500.

Innovation, as contrasted with expansion, has been focused this year on our internal arrangements. We have begun a study of our Sectional structure, to see whether it is still adequate to present circumstances; and we have begun also to consider whether the numbers and age-structure of our Fellowship need modification. Today, for the first time, the Fellowship of the Academy (under 75) reaches the sacred number of 300. We have asked a Committee to consider the problems arising from the fact that, if no change is made, elections to the Academy in 1973 may be unduly dominated by the mathematics of numbers and ages. The statutory limit was raised from 200 to 300 in 1967; it is surely a pleasing fact that so large an increase should so soon appear inadequate.

Now, finally, a word about our staff and premises. It is conventional to thank our Secretary and his staff for their services to the Academy. My own reaction, as a newcomer behind the scenes, is not of conventional gratitude but of admiration tinged with incredulity. The work has obviously multiplied; the staff has not. And the premises seem to me already inadequate. In 1966, when the President announced the impending move from Burlington Gardens, he said that 'the accommodation will not be as ample as might be desired'; I have no doubt at all that it will be intolerably congested within a few years.

The Secretary has warned us that he wishes to retire from

his present post not later than the end of the coming year: I say no more at present about that deplorable prospect; the truth is that the work is rapidly outgrowing our staff and their premises, and the burden is certain to become heavier in the years immediately ahead. We need a new structure and more room.

I conclude, where I ought perhaps to have begun, with an expression of thanks—on behalf of the whole Academy and its staff, as I am sure I may—to my predecessor, Sir Kenneth Wheare. Our personal friendship began forty years ago in Oxford. I probably predicted at that time that he would become, among other things, President of the British Academy. I am quite sure that he did not predict it of me. The activities of the Academy gathered notable pace and volume under Sir Kenneth's administration. His wisdom and experience could hardly have been, and certainly have not been, replaced; nor have his felicity and flair in making Presidential addresses and speeches at Academy banquets. I hope that the loss of Exeter College, Oxford, will be our gain, and that he may be free to continue the service and advice which steered the Academy so successfully through four years of rapid progress in times that were not easy.