

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
BY SIR KENNETH WHEARE

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ON this, the first occasion upon which I have had the opportunity to address the Academy as its President, I want to express, straightaway, on behalf of us all the debt we owe to my predecessor as President, Lord Robbins. In his five years as President—for as you know he agreed at our special and urgent request to accept an additional year beyond the normal term of four—he has guided our affairs with the energy, wisdom, and distinction which all who know him and have worked with him have come to expect. His period of office coincided with a critical stage in the Academy's affairs when important decisions had to be taken which affected our future not only financially but also in the fields of learning and research. We were most fortunate to have as our President at the time one who is an outstanding figure not only in his own subject but also in the wider field of higher education, and is acknowledged to be so in this country and internationally. And I do not hesitate to add that it has been a particular pleasure to us to have Lord Robbins as our President because, with all his high distinction and force of mind and character, he has remained a fair-minded, good-tempered, and very friendly chairman. It is a particular pleasure to us all and a great encouragement and support to me personally that he has accepted election to the Council and has agreed to act as our Treasurer for the time being so that we may make full use of his services in the future.

The work of the Academy throughout the past year is set out in detail in the Annual Report which our Secretary has introduced to you. You will observe that in its variety and extent, both in time and space, it has increased once more. What is clear, however, is that, if funds were available, much more could be done and much could be done better. As Lord Robbins has explained, we have been obliged to scrutinize most carefully our grants-in-aid to institutes and schools abroad and our grants to individuals and projects and there are many who could have made good use of more than they got and are consequently disappointed. But when I say this, I am not lodging a complaint about what we have received from Her Majesty's

Government. When you have a government that is endeavouring to advance in education on all fronts at once, it is inevitable that some fronts will feel that they have not received enough. We appreciate the difficulties of the government and we are profoundly grateful for the help that we have received from the Department of Education and Science and in particular for the interest and understanding of Mr. Toby Weaver our chief guide and mentor. As I said at our Annual Dinner, we are not affluent but we are not destitute; we are an industrious and respectable and honest academy of modest means living for the present at any rate in somewhat reduced circumstances.

I would like, at this point, to make a special mention of a most generous gift which we have received from one of our own Fellows, Dr. Gertrude Caton-Thompson, who has presented the sum of £21,000 to the Academy for investment to provide grants for archaeological research. The purpose of awards from the Gertrude Caton-Thompson Fund is the furtherance of archaeological research whether in the field or in publication by scholars selected preferably, but not necessarily, from the Fellowship of the British Academy. This is a munificent addition to our resources and I know I speak for you all when I express to Dr. Caton-Thompson our warmest gratitude. It is also most encouraging to receive this expression of confidence in the work which the Academy is doing from one of our own most distinguished and discriminating senior Fellows.

In the year that is to come some changes are already envisaged. We expect to move into our new quarters at Burlington House, part of the accommodation vacated by the Royal Society, now installed so splendidly and properly in Carlton House Terrace. We cannot, we do not, pretend that we have obtained as much space as we would have liked, for the demands of the Chemical Society, forcefully advanced by Lord Todd, proved too powerful for us. But there can be no doubt, in my opinion, that in Burlington House we will be much more appropriately housed and that the move will be in every way a great improvement upon our present position. It is my hope that, when the move is made, our Fellows may be able to have a modest domestic celebration in our new quarters, perhaps at the time of the meetings of Sections in January next, as a kind of house-warming to mark our occupation. But much will depend, of course, on the progress made in the coming months in carrying out renovation and adaptation.

The mention of following in the footsteps of the Royal

Society leads me to speak of a matter upon which, I believe, we would do well to profit from the example of the Royal Society—I mean the subject of exchanges with foreign academies. As you all know, the British Academy came into existence on the initiative of the Royal Society in 1901 to provide a body competent to represent the United Kingdom in historical, philosophical, and philological studies in the International Association of Scientific and Literary Academies, where the Royal Society itself represented Natural Science. In most European countries academies cover both the sciences and the humanities, but whereas the interchange of scientists has made considerable progress under the leadership and organization of the Royal Society, it is clear that in this matter the humanities fall far behind the sciences. We have had some most friendly advice and help on this matter from the officers of the Royal Society, whose President, Professor Blackett, and Foreign Secretary, Professor Sir Harold Thompson, have explained the Royal Society's own schemes to us and have expressed the hope that, on the humanities side of foreign academies where the Royal Society itself is not able, of course, to arrange exchanges, we in the British Academy might take some initiative to fill this need, an initiative which, they believe, would be widely welcomed and appreciated by foreign academies.

As you will have seen from the Annual Report, we have made some small beginnings in this field. We play our full part in the deliberations of the Union Académique Internationale, at whose meeting in Bucharest last month we were represented by Professor Sir Roger Mynors and Professor E. G. Turner. Under the cultural exchange agreement between Great Britain and Hungary one of our Vice-Presidents, Mr. Pope-Hennessy, visited Budapest at the invitation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, while Dr. Laszlo Matrai, Fellow of the Hungarian Academy and Director of the University Library in Budapest, later came to England. More recently we made arrangements through the British Council for Dr. Christopher Hill, the Master of Balliol College, Oxford, to go to Budapest this summer, and he reports warmly upon his reception there. There is a similar scheme in force between Bulgaria and Britain, and Mr. A. J. P. Taylor, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, was the welcome guest of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for two weeks last March. We are arranging some further visits and look forward to receiving scholars from Hungary and Bulgaria during the current year.

But apart from these modest though valuable arrangements, the overseas contacts of the British Academy are of a casual kind. From time to time research grants are made to individual scholars to enable them to co-operate with overseas colleagues; and provision is made on a small scale for the attendance of British scholars at overseas conferences. Foreign scholars visiting this country, generally with the aid of the British Council, are received by the British Academy and are, from time to time, invited to lecture to it. But only in an indirect or exceptional fashion does the Academy at present influence the choice of these visitors except under the agreements with Hungary and Bulgaria to which I have referred.

It seems to me that we should consider very seriously now whether the time has not come for us to take some initiative in this matter of exchanges between British and foreign scholars in our fields. But before we attempt to make any decisions or proposals on the subject, we must, of course, find out what is the extent and nature of the need for additional facilities in scholarly exchanges in humanistic studies—more specifically I have in mind the fields of history, archaeology, philosophy, linguistic and sociological studies. It stands to reason that these needs will not run closely parallel with those of the scientists, whose experimental and laboratory work presents special problems and opportunities. We must discover and measure our own needs. There is no point in doing something just because it sounds vaguely well intentioned; it must be directed to the meeting of some definite and valuable need.

We shall be discussing this subject within the Academy during this coming year, starting with a valuable paper prepared for us by our Secretary which we propose to place in the first instance before our Advisory and Finance Committee. And this leads me to say that any scheme upon which we propose to embark will need money—not large sums, in my view, but large or small, some source of support will have to be found. But I hope that the Academy may feel that at least an investigation of the need for increased interchange of scholars in the humanities between this country and foreign countries through co-operation between the British and foreign academies is well worth doing. And it may be that in due course we shall revive the office of Foreign Secretary of the Academy.

May I conclude by expressing on behalf of you all our appreciation of the work which is done by the permanent staff of the Academy who deal with what is a steadily increasing

burden of administration. I am sure that, in the experience of us all, the staff presents a cheerful and enthusiastic countenance in its dealings with us and carries out its duties most efficiently and smoothly. This is not the time for me to refer to the head of our administration, whose retirement on 31 December 1968 has already been mentioned. There will in fact be such an opportunity—I am proposing to the Council of the Academy with every confidence of success that the guest of honour at our Annual Dinner next March shall be Sir Mortimer Wheeler. And, may I add, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, F.R.S., as well as F.B.A. This last link between the Academy and its older sister has given tremendous pleasure to us all.