

## Editorial

The College's building in Pall Mall East was opened in 1825 by the Sovereign, supported by five Royal Highnesses, five Dukes including the Iron one, thirteen other Peers of the Realm and the Prime Minister. This weighty entourage was engineered by Sir Henry Halford who presided over a College that boasted a total of ninety-one Fellows. Sir Henry, the archetype of Establishment man, operated in a corridor of power that stretched only from the College to the Athenaeum Club, of which he was a founder member. So central was his concept of authority that the periphery just did not exist. It was no accident that the architecture of the College and the Athenaeum was virtually identical; both buildings reflected his philosophy. It is probably no accident that in the first ten years of the Pall Mall College nothing happened and the Fellowship increased by only twenty-five. The nature of the building and its site were a positive encouragement to inertia. Later, when the College began to stir, its progress was despite, rather than because of, the College building.

Ten years ago the College opened its new doors on Regent's Park to represent 1,020 Fellows. Now, a decade later, there are 2,702 Fellows and a formidable body of that new species, the Collegiate Member. These figures alone highlight the complete change of the College in 150 years. It is a nice point as to whether the College could have expanded in numbers and activities if it were still in the old building or whether the new building encouraged the College to its expansion. Therefore it is fitting that the College's Treasurer at the time when the building plans were laid should record in this issue of the Journal his personal account of events and his impressions of the effect of the new building on the life of the College. Mr Denys Lasdun was asked to contribute his views on the effect of structure on function but declined on a point of modesty. Future historians will seek out Dr Bomford's written contribution and will be able to listen to the conversation between himself, the present Treasurer and Mr Lasdun, which has recently been taped and preserved in the Library.

The affairs of men always seem to be governed by perspicacity laced with serendipity. So it was with the College's decisions on its building. The choice of site was obviously vital. To have accepted a Harley Street venue would have been an invitation to canonise that journalist's invention, the 'Harley Street specialist'. The breadth of Regent's Park encouraged the

'openness' of the College that is the most distinctive feature of Mr Lasdun's building. Maybe there are some who feel that a series of committee rooms should have been clothed by the ghost of Nash, but to those who have had the opportunity of actually using the College building Dr Bomford's words of praise ring true. It is a daunting task to design a building that must house an organisation catering for the aspirations, dissensions and disinterest of so many Fellows and Members. Maybe Mr Lasdun caught the mood of the College that was not apparent to many. He certainly created a place for a College that has opened its doors to a wider world, perhaps prompted by the open building.

We are so used to the intricate and immediate relationship of structure to function in the human body that we seek too close a relationship between the structure of a building and its function. As physicians we have tried for too many years to function in premises whose structure was designed for and in a past age. Whether it be surgery, health centre or hospital, we have no real control over the type of premises in which we work. A whole generation of doctors has put up with inadequate accommodation while looking to a brighter future. But disappointment has been repeated to the point of despair. The National Health Service started with a mass of all-purpose Victorian institutions and the emergency buildings of two World Wars. Capital has never been available and every new scheme of improvement has been thwarted by cuts in expenditure. Neither the patient nor the doctor have had a significant influence on building programmes. These have been dominated by central government and have been cut at the first hint of economic difficulty. No one is asking for a palace of prestige. What is still needed is the architecture designed to ensure the dignity of man when sick. If the consumers of health care are really going to have a voice in the expensive reorganisation of the Health Service, they should insist on a proper degree of privacy and a reasonable standard of accommodation for all those who seek medical advice. In turn, the medical profession should insist on reasonable conditions for all medical auxiliaries. At the moment many have to put up with working conditions that would never be allowed in a factory. People before buildings may be a superficially attractive slogan when dealing with low salaries. It neglects the importance of working conditions and puts off a very evil day. Whatever the sporadic and local improvements in building by the DHSS, the people as a whole, those who are treated and those who treat, must meet in places designed for effective care of health. The function of health services cannot continue without an adequate structure to house it.