

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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**T**HE purpose of our annual meetings is to transact certain essential business and to consider policy. But before passing to the latter question, I wish to dwell rather longer than usual on the subject matter of the Annual Report. I have a very distinct impression that the nature of the Academy and the objects of its activities are very imperfectly understood by the general public, from which, in its capacity as a body of taxpayers, we nowadays draw so much of our support. In the English context the word 'academy' is well understood as the description of an educational institution: and it is also associated in the public mind with the exhibition of certain types of works of art. But the central sense in which it is understood elsewhere, the historic sense of an association of dedicated scholars, designed to foster and advance learning and to preserve intellectual standards, is not so familiar: and it is desirable that it should be better known.

For this purpose nothing could be more effective than a wider knowledge of the contents of our Annual Report: and I am, therefore, arranging that in future, in addition to its usual distribution, copies should be made available to Members of Parliament and other influential persons. A brief perusal of this document will reveal, as you know, a wide and significant range of activities. Archaeological salvage-work in Nubia, excavations in Jerusalem, the compilation of a sylloge of coins of the British Isles, a Medieval Latin Dictionary, the recovery of Early English Church Music, an Encyclopaedia of Islam, the editing and publishing of the Latin works of Plato and Aristotle, a Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire are examples. We promote yearly lectures delivered by the highest authorities on their subjects and published in our proceedings. We act as adviser to Her Majesty's Government and are responsible for the distribution of funds to British Schools and Institutes in Athens, Rome, Ankara, East Africa, Teheran, Jerusalem and Iraq. We make grants to a large number of learned societies devoted to special purposes. We subsidize no less than twenty-six learned journals: it is no exaggeration to

say that in some instances since the war, our grants have made the difference between the continuation and the closing down of world-famous periodicals. We collaborate with other learned societies abroad. We act as general adviser to the government on matters relating to research in the humanities and we are responsible for the distribution of the now not inconsiderable Treasury grant for this activity.

These invaluable grants have now been available for two successive years and it is perhaps desirable that I should expatiate a little further on their purpose and significance. In my address last year, I explained the procedure which we have established for the discharge of our functions in this respect: the invitation for applications, the scrutiny by the secretariat and the Research Committee, the reference to Sections and their recommendations, the establishment of a list by the Research Committee and its final scrutiny and ratification by the Council. This year I would like to draw your attention to the nature of the researches now receiving support. The full list is on pp. 6-12 of the Report. As illustrations of range and substance I would quote the following:

- £750 for the completion of a Union Catalogue of Foreign Law. So far information has been collected concerning holdings of about 550 legal periodicals published in, or relating to, Western Europe in the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, and London. It is now proposed to concentrate on the holdings of Codes, collections of Statutes, Law Reports, and major treatises in the law of Western European countries.
- £250 for the preparation for publication by the Warburg Institute of the final volume of a complete *catalogue raisonné* of the drawings of Nicolas Poussin.
- £500 for study of the Vatican Archives, with special reference to the period of the Councils of Constance, Basel and Pisa and the Lateran. It is proposed to explore the relationship between the regular curial offices and the officials appointed by the general councils of the fifteenth century, particularly with regard to cases of conflict between the two Jurisdictions.
- £1,500 for the systematic preparation of a series of publications of Early English Church Music down to *c.* 1640. The project is also supported by the Pilgrim Trust, the Elmgrant Trust, and All Souls College, Oxford.
- £1,000 for the correlation of the history and traditions of the Eastern Region of Nigeria, by means of reference to the Government Archives in Ibadan and Enugu, a study of

the Eastern Delta Hinterland (the Ibo and Ibibio-speaking people), and the collection of evidence in some of the more remote areas of the region.

£1,000 to employ a cartographer and historian for the preparation for publication of the British Section of a European Atlas illustrating the development of towns in Western Europe (including Poland) down to about 1800–25. The project is one of three major commitments of the *Arbeitsgruppe für Städtegeschichte*, a sub-committee of the International Committee for the Historical Sciences.

£1,000 for the continuation by members of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq of the repair, sorting, classification, and publication of the collection of Assyrian ivories discovered in recent years at Nimrud, and now housed largely in Baghdad.

£500 for publication by the Royal Historical Society of a *Handbook of Pre-Conquest Charters* prepared by the applicant. The list is intended to include all diplomas, leases, wills, writs, and similar documents that purport to have been drawn up in England before the Norman Conquest.

£1,000 for the continued preparation of the *Scottish National Dictionary* and the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, under the guidance of a council supported by the four Scottish universities, the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, and the Scottish National Dictionary Association.

£350 to prepare a new edition of the *Arithmētikē Eisagōgē*, a mathematical treatise by Nicomachus, and a first edition of a commentary on that work by Asclepius of Tralles. The project involves visiting several European libraries.

To these examples, which come from the General Research Fund list, I should like to add one further project, supported *inter alia* by the Pilgrim Trust Research Fund—£750 towards the cost of the publication of a new and complete edition of the *Works and Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham* under the direction of a Committee formed by University College, London—the repository of the immensely valuable Bentham papers bequeathed at the death of the author 130 years ago.

As I have said, this list is purely illustrative; and the selection has been designed to show something of the range of the projects supported rather than to suggest any order of pre-eminence. I hope, however, it is sufficient to show the importance in terms of the advancement of learning of the subventions we have now the power to make. It is safe to say that none of the enterprises I have mentioned will yield a return which would tempt any

commercial undertaking to finance them. Yet in relation to the increase of knowledge in their respective spheres, how considerable is their prospective contribution; and in relation to the aggregate volume of public expenditure, how inconsiderable the cost!

Our grant in this respect last year was £25,000. This year it has been raised to £40,000. We cannot, therefore, complain of the rate of increase—60 per cent. Nevertheless, we could do with more—with considerably more. This for two reasons:

First, even at the present level, we receive applications for many more worth-while projects than it is within our power to finance. It must not be thought that the lists of those which survive exhaust the number of those which deserve to survive. The scrutiny by the Sections involves, not merely the elimination of worthless applications, but the placing in an order of those which have intrinsic value; and not all of those which are so placed find room in the final allocation.

Secondly, very many of the allocations actually made represent a substantial cutting down of the sums originally applied for. Moreover, where many of the enterprises thus subsidized are concerned, the contributions of the Academy are mere additions to funds otherwise raised. Now so long as the Academy remains merely a contributor to schemes of research, it cannot control them in the way which its very considerable resources of scholarship would entitle it to do: and this is a very definite limitation. It is surely desirable that the Academy should be in a position itself to initiate research on a large scale. The French Academy is the parent and director of some of its most important undertakings. The Royal Society initiates and promotes major projects in scientific research. I do not think we should be content until we are in a position to do likewise without curtailing the kind of distribution which at present we undertake.

I have been dwelling on our grants from the Government and the use that we make of them. But I would not like to leave the subject of finance without emphasizing the extent to which we benefit from private donations and, indeed, the extent to which the various activities of the Academy owe their origin to this basis. It is obvious from the titles how many of our most famous Lectureships spring from private donors. In the past, our central and traditional functions have been founded primarily upon the income of capital benefactions now amounting at cost to more than £90,000. And our freedom of action to experiment with those other developments, which now loom so large in the total picture, derives from the same source.



In such connexions, our normal procedure has been to experiment with non-Governmental resources and, only when experience has proved the worth of a policy, to approach the Government. For example, the present Research scheme was anticipated in a pioneering way for seven years by annual grants from the Pilgrim Trust. These could not go on indefinitely. But they did show the existence of a need: they roused the determination to find a solution; and the methods adopted to administer them suggested ways in which the need could be met. Again, the subvention of learned periodicals was first made possible by the Nuffield Foundation which enabled us for five years to save some of those essential publications from the financial difficulties of the post-war period. This policy was continued with help from All Souls College; and only now, after eight years of experiment and experience and the expenditure of £31,000, do we draw upon the Treasury. Finally, even in the new overseas institutes which the Academy has been instrumental in establishing with Treasury help, official assistance has been amplified and rendered viable by substantial grants from the Nuffield Foundation, the Wolfson Trust, the Gulbenkian Foundation, and other non-official sources.

Thus, the fact that we are now assisted to a greater degree than in the past by public money does not in the least mean that our need for private benefaction is any the less. On the contrary indeed: there is an ease and an elbow room conferred by the possession of funds of one's own which no amount of annual grants from the exchequer for specific purposes can ever give: and as we attain, on the basis of these grants, the position in the intellectual life of this country which is appropriate to our purpose and objectives, it is all the more necessary that, in the maintenance of this position and the elastic discharge of the duties which it entails, we should be reinforced by endowments which afford freedom for experiment and an adequate reserve for contingencies and developments unlikely to command immediate government support. I still hope that one day the happy event may occur that some of those who still have it in their power to make donations on a princely scale may realize that, in the modern age in which so much welfare is now provided from public sources, the endowment of the Academy is at least as worthy an undertaking as the private financing of the more fashionable eleemosynary activities whose functions in fact are now largely discharged by the state.

I turn now to problems of much broader interest. In the

coming years, as you know, the whole apparatus of higher education in this country, particularly the universities, is destined to undergo a great expansion. The present university population is in the neighbourhood of 125,800. In ten years' time, by a policy which the government have already accepted, it will be 219,000: and by 1980 if the same policy is continued it will be 346,000.

Now the Academy as such is not primarily interested in the processes of education or with the policies which regulate numbers. I will not therefore detain you by lingering at any length on the reasons for this expansion. Suffice it to say that in my judgment they are very compelling. If it were not to take place, then it is overwhelmingly probable that there would be turned away from the doors of the educational institutions concerned an ever-increasing number of young people who, on present standards of admission, could obtain easy access. Furthermore, we should be lagging far behind the provision already planned for the future in most of the important countries of the world; and, quite apart from the intellectual and spiritual deprivation thus involved, I am clear that our relative position would suffer.

But while the Academy is not primarily interested in processes or numbers, it is very interested in institutions of learning. For better or worse, much of the scholarship which is its main concern is concentrated in our institutions of higher education. From its point of view, therefore, it is of paramount importance that the development of these institutions should not impair the quantity or the quality of such scholarship: and there have not been lacking voices arguing that the prospective expansion carries with it just this danger.

Now I am quite sure that the fear is groundless that expansion as such is bound to be accompanied by a deterioration of standards and scholarly achievement. At the beginning of the century the university population here was about 20,000: by 1962-3 it was 118,000—an expansion of nearly 500 per cent. Yet it would be difficult, indeed, I would say, impossible, to show any decline of standards of scholarship during this period. Experience elsewhere is similar. In the United States, where already the percentage of the relevant age group now receiving higher education is about what ours may reach round about 1980, standards have been steadily rising. If regard is had to the products of the great graduate schools in that area, schools, be it noted, where numbers run into as many thousands as ours

do into hundreds, it would be hard to sustain the view that expansion of numbers must necessarily entail an academic decline.

Nevertheless, it would be foolish to deny that there are real dangers; and these dangers are more likely to be avoided if they are clearly recognized from the outset.

There is first the danger of regimentation in the interests of ill-conceived policies. Now that our universities depend to such a large degree upon government subsidies, there is a large and vociferous school of thought which emphasizes the maxim that he who pays the piper calls the tune and argues that the business of the university is *training* rather than *research*. The universities, it is argued, should concentrate on education. The advancement of knowledge should be carried out in special institutes.

I am sure that I do not need to dispute before members of this Academy the case against this half-baked and impercipient attitude. I say nothing against the existence of some separate research institutes—though the case, I fancy, is usually much stronger in natural science and technology than in the humanities. But the conjunction of the functions of teaching and research, which is one of the central characteristics of our university traditions, is surely something which has abundantly proved its value in practice: and experience in areas which have tended to abandon it, seems to me to prove pretty conclusively that we should be very ill advised to follow their example. It would be a bad thing, both for education and for research, if official policies should lead to their separation.

The second danger is more subtle and insidious. It is the danger, namely, that the mere process of further expansion, still more the change in size of university institutions which is almost bound to accompany this expansion, will itself be inimical to scholarly activities—the danger that the demands of mass education will be so exacting, that even without government interference tending to produce that result, the advancement of learning may suffer and scholarly standards may decline.

I think this danger is a real one, especially in the next few years when, because of the abnormally high number of births in the years immediately following the war, the universities will be flooded with an almost discontinuously increased number of applicants, whose claims both as regards quality and as the delayed by-product of a national emergency will be so strong

that it will be virtually impossible to deny them. The years of the so-called bulge are going to be years of severe difficulty for all who are engaged in the business of universities. And looking further ahead, when the pressure of the post-war birth-rate has given way to the pressure due to the trend of improved education in the schools, it is hard to believe that the difficulties will speedily diminish.

Nevertheless, they should not be insurmountable. The difficulties of expansion are largely, if not wholly, difficulties of will and organization, rather than of any fundamental intractability in the situation. I am sure that, given the determination on the part of those responsible and given adequate support from the government—an indispensable condition—it is not impossible to develop university structures which shall at once provide adequate training for an enlarged proportion of the population and safeguard, and indeed improve, opportunities for the advancement of learning. If others can do it elsewhere, why should not we?

At any rate, and here I return to the main theme of this address, it is here that the Academy has one of its most important functions to perform. It is not our business as an Academy to participate in educational politics. It is not our business to tell university authorities what they should do to meet the needs of expansion. But it is our business to maintain standards and to foster the advancement of learning. It is our function to see that only the highest scholarship receives recognition as such. It is our function to see that opportunities exist for the adequate practice of scholarly activities and to protest where they do not. The performance of these functions will be a matter of especial importance in the period which we are now entering. I am confident that the Academy, with its immense reserves of talent and goodwill, will not fail to rise to the occasion.