

## COMMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

6 July 1966

WE proceed to Item 8, the President's observations, and I can reassure the Academy on this occasion that these observations will be brief. You all know, I imagine, the reasons for brevity. During the last twelve months we have been the recipient of the magnificent donation from the organizers of the Thank-Offering to Britain Fund, already mentioned in the Report; and it was thought by the Council that it would be fitting that extraordinary measures should be taken to acknowledge our gratitude for this most splendid gesture. Accordingly it was decided, and I was decreed to be the victim, that the Presidential Address on this occasion should be, so to speak, an inauguration of the lecture series which is going to be based on this endowment.

Our ideas concerning the future of this endowment are still to some extent in a fluid condition. The intention of the donors was that the fund should be used in some way directly or indirectly designed to forward the welfare of the inhabitants of this country. It is clear therefore that that purpose would be achieved by an annual lecture dealing with subjects which fell within those terms of reference, and for that arrangements are already in train. A regular series will begin next year. For the time being we have decided that the residue—which will be very substantial, since the amount paid for an annual lecture is after all quite negligible—shall be devoted to the provision of a Senior Fellowship or Fellowships. Until all the covenanted money has come in, which will take some time, we shall offer one Fellowship; later on it will be a question of one or two, according to our experience with applications for the Fellowships offered in the early years of the endowment.

I think the Secretary has dealt very adequately with the position of our General Research Fund. This Fund, which is provided year by year by a government grant, has already abundantly vindicated itself in practice. Year after year we have been able to provide substantial assistance to thoroughly worth-while projects of research. We have established a procedure which, I think, ensures the most thorough scrutiny that

---

you could easily obtain of the different applications; the organization of the Academy into Sections means in effect that you have standing committees of the best experts in the country to advise the Council on the worth-whileness of the different projects. I have no doubt that this procedure has come to stay. As the Secretary says, we make full use of the Fund; we could in fact make immediate use of at least twice as much. Indeed, when I think of the needs of research in the Humanities, when I think in particular of the needs for financing large archaeological expeditions, or large projects of research fostered directly by the Academy and not initiated from outside, I have no doubt at all that we could make quite good use, not of some £50,000 a year but rather, let us say, of £150,000 or even £200,000. It may not be reasonable in the present financial crisis to hope for an increase of that order of magnitude, but I do not think we should let it fall out of sight as an ultimate desideratum.

In this connexion perhaps I might expatiate a little further on the idea of projects directly sponsored by the Academy. Members of the Academy will recollect that this idea has been ventilated from time to time in the Sections; it has been discussed by the Council; and at our Annual Banquet it was urged upon us in eloquent terms by no less a person than Lord Butler. We have not been indifferent to the heavenly vision; and inquiries are now on foot concerning several projects which have been tentatively proposed by the Sections. I will not discuss the nature of these projects at this stage, since they are still very much in embryo. But I think I might reveal the one which has perhaps acquired most momentum, the proposal that there should be compiled under the auspices of the Academy, with its vast resources of archaeological knowledge and so on, an Early History of Agriculture. The suggestion is that in this project we should seek collaboration with friends in the Royal Society and thus form something of a bridge in this connexion between Science and the Humanities.

In my observations last year I mentioned the indifferent position of the Institutes abroad, in respect of which we are the distributing agents of H.M. Government. I am happy to say that the appeals that we have made in that respect to the Treasury have not fallen on deaf ears; and we have been able to make some increase in these subventions. If you will look at page 31 of the Annual Report, you will see that our allocations to the British Schools for the period ending 31 March 1966 rose from a total of £87,000 in the preceding year to £106,000 in that

year. This increase is to some extent illusory, since in these countries, as in the United Kingdom, the value of money is continually being depleted by the process of inflation. Still, in circumstances of this sort, it is something to be able to keep where you are and we hope that these increases, with others which are in contemplation, will go a little beyond that. Might I add in connexion with the Institutes, that it is a pity that the impression sometimes seems to prevail that their work is entirely archaeological in nature. True, some of the most conspicuous work which is done in the Institutes is of that kind. But much else is being done, and it is far better to regard them as institutes for the representation in the countries in which they are situated of the best scholarship in humane culture in this country, than to regard them as being specialized on any one subject.

Finally, I have an item of good news which I did release at the Annual Banquet but which perhaps it would be right and proper for me to mention here, since not all Members of the Academy are able to come to that gathering. It will be remembered that, on earlier occasions speaking from this Chair, I have lamented the deplorable accommodation of this Academy. I have dwelt on the contrast between the squalid conditions through which the Academy is approached, and the very meagre sense of opulence and appropriate splendour to be encountered when you actually reach our portals—a very poor comparison with the princely accommodation which one finds elsewhere in Academies of comparable standing. I think, for instance, of the marvellous quarters of the Accademia dei Lincei in Rome at the Farnesina Palace, or the splendid palace which houses the Bavarian Academy which I visited recently. I am happy to report to the Academy that these lamentations and representations have, to some extent—to 75 per cent., perhaps—been successful. You probably know that it is contemplated that the Royal Society, which enjoys such distinguished offices, will shortly be moving to Carlton House Terrace, and its offices in Burlington House will be vacant. By decision of the Ministry of Public Building and Works the Academy will be allowed to move into a part of those offices—and I may say, from the point of view of appearance, the most impressive part. The accommodation itself will not be as ample as might be desired. The Secretary, who after all is not a diminutive specimen of the human race, will be a little cramped as he strides up and down in his office. The chemists have bagged a couple of rooms of which we could have made very good use. But on the whole

---

I think we may congratulate ourselves that we shall have moved a step up in the world and that at any rate our address will henceforward be respectable.

It only remains for me to say what ought always to be said at these meetings but what is not always said: how much we are indebted to the Secretary and his dedicated staff for what they do so unobtrusively from day to day throughout the year. We have our ceremonial occasions, in which the President and the Council figure conspicuously. But the real work of this Academy is done in this office by Sir Mortimer Wheeler and his talented assistants.

Sir Mortimer informs me that under 'Other Business' there is nothing to mention but the fact that tea is being served in the Council Room and that we shall reassemble in this room at five o'clock for the Inaugural Lecture of the Thank-Offering to Britain Fund.