

## REVIEW

Report of the Medical School Advisory Committee June, 1965.  
University of Nottingham p:76 Price 6s.

This is a small pamphlet whose size and price belie its importance. It is the report of a Medical School Advisory Committee headed by Sir George Pickering to "offer to the University (of Nottingham) advice and recommendations about medical education, teaching and research, and about the best arrangement for the nature and layout of the buildings required, and about the University's administrative relationships with the other bodies concerned". Its composition is largely drawn from academic men with representatives of the University administration, and would constitute, as Sir Robert Aitken suggested, an academic advisory committee. The committee took evidence from Universities like Aberdeen, Glasgow, and Newcastle of Britain, and Harvard, Rochester, Stamford and Western Reserve of America, and in addition made reference to proposals of Duke, Auckland and the Fry-Malleson.

Briefly, it attempts to formulate a method of undergraduate education that will ensure the preservation of curiosity and conformity with some of the modern concepts of education, and for these, it adopts the guiding principles of (i) reshaping the preclinical course with that of science departments, (ii) integrating and coordinating preclinical and clinical courses (iii) planning staffing to meet both University and community needs.

After pointing out what it believes to be the major defects of traditional medical education such as overloading and chaotic arrangement of instruction. its proposal entails a 3-year preclinical, 2-year clinical, and 2-year pre-registration period of training, wherein the student takes a degree in medical biological science midway. and is guided by tutorials and apprenticeship more than by formal teaching till he can be assessed by his regular work and a liberalised examination after his clinical years are completed. His competency to practise will be taken care of after that by the 2-year pre-registration, one of which would be "more liberal in offering much wider variety and in providing more free time for study". The report

also makes some passing recommendation for postgraduate education.

It is important to note that the committee makes reference to two points: firstly that this is not really meant for Universities designed to turn out a doctor who is to be *competent* on qualification to practise medicine, surgery, and midwifery; and secondly that results of educational experiments are notoriously hard to judge, and many are too recent to justify an assessment. Bearing these in mind, one may read this report as a summary of recent experiments in medical education seen in America, Britain and even Australia, and although many of the points may be refutable in due course on the basis of results obtained in the future, the recommendations, nevertheless, bring home some realisation of the dissatisfactions with the medical course voiced widely today.

Insufficient mention is made of the much greater cost in the way of tutors and facilities that would be required to assess a student on daily work when compared with that required by the orthodox examination methods, and it may be worth noting that without adequate provision in the way of increased expenditure and staffing, guiding principles alone would not bring about any improvement in medical education. Hence it is envisaged in the Report, the existence of a department with not one but many professors, a concept which must inevitably make more acute the present staff shortage all over the world, and represents a breakaway from the traditional British single professor departments.

Taken by and large, it is a valuable report, and should be read and pondered over by all those who are interested in modern medical education. One feels that although it has not produced a panacea for the morbid state of present day medical education, it has in its recommendations placed on record the current remedies still to be tried and critically assessed in the future.

Gwee Ah Leng