

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

BY SIR GEORGE CLARK

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I HOPE the *Annual Report*, in spite of its very sober wording, will give the impression that your Officers and Council have again accomplished a strenuous year's work. Some matters on which they have spent time and effort are not yet sufficiently advanced to be ready for inclusion in the *Report*. Others have moved forward since the *Report* went to press. I might mention the creation of a department of antiquities in Uganda, for which the Archaeological and Historical Advisory Committee would like to claim some of the credit. More than once half a line in the *Report* stands for the result of many interviews and thousands of words of correspondence. The Treasury's block grant was once again increased, and in thanking our Secretary, our Foreign Secretary, and our Treasurer for all they have done in these and other directions, I ought to remind you that each success is not only obtained by hard work but likely to entail more work in the sequel. I am sorry to say that your office staff has been overworked. This adds to my pleasure in congratulating Miss Pearson, our Assistant Secretary, on her promotion in the Order of the British Empire. Miss Pearson became a Member of the Order in 1934 as a recognition of her work for the Academy's Committee on the Tokio Library. She began her valuable work here during the secretaryship of Sir Israel Gollancz.

The name of Sir Israel Gollancz has been before us recently because he was at one time President of the Maccabaeans, a society to which we owe our newest benefaction. Although the purposes of this society are convivial, it has from time to time endowed prizes for the natural sciences and this year it offered a sum, which your Council gratefully accepted, to endow a lecture as a commemoration of the tercentenary of the resettlement of the Jews in England. It accepted the Council's proposal that the lecture should be given once in every three years on some subject connected with Jurisprudence in the wider sense of the term. This welcome gift fills a gap in the range of our endowed lectures, and for us, as well as for the donors, it has a high symbolic value. When he formally made the presentation, the President of the Maccabaeans, Col. Sir Louis Gluckstein, spoke of it as a token of the gratitude of the Anglo-Jewish

Community; but I felt bound to reply on your behalf that this gratitude should be mutual and equal. The lecture will remind us of the many Jewish scholars who have enriched the intellectual life of this country, and also of a decisive event in the formation of our intellectual and social freedom.

Among the Fellows whom you have elected this afternoon two are ladies, so that we now have eleven women as Fellows. The first woman elected to our body was Beatrice Webb, who recorded her first impressions of the Academy in an entry of 28 April 1932, soon after the sectional meetings of that year, which was recently published in her *Diaries*. She described it as 'a funny little body of elderly and aged men—the aged predominating', and she noted that 'the little crowd gave a lifeless and derelict impression—very Oxford donnish in culture and tone'. She summarized the business of the Academy in rather disparaging words, concluding that the most important business was 'canvassing for rival candidates to fill vacancies up to the statutory limit'. Oddly enough she did not mention the original function of participating in international learned activities for which the Academy was founded, and perhaps she did not appreciate the importance or the difficulty of elections when, from the nature of the work to be done, the choice must depend not on ordinary capability but on other, essentially academic, qualities. A newcomer in the nineteen-thirties could excusably fail to see that the Academy had good reasons for some of its apparent deficiencies. Our continued refusal to build up a library has always seemed to me an excellent example. We receive many books, but we do far better by sending them to the most appropriate existing libraries than we could by building round them an expensive collection of our own which would satisfy no real need, even if it made our rooms more conformable to what is expected in the habitat of a learned society.

The Academy works as one unit among many which are concerned with the advancement of learning in this country. No book of reference gives a conspectus of them all, and no one seems to have classified the types of official, semi-official, or private bodies which promote this purpose. First in magnitude, and not only in magnitude, are those which depend entirely or mainly on public money. The British Museum in Bloomsbury has many departments from every one of which officers have been elected to our Fellowship. It is governed by a body of Trustees whose composition was determined in the eighteenth century, but which has proved itself able to work through com-

mittees and sub-committees in the manner of the twentieth. There are other great museums and galleries with more or less similar constitutions. When Members of Parliament ask questions about the British Museum it is for the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to answer them, but he is only one among a dozen or more ministers whose answers sometimes touch on matters of interest to us. The number of headings in the estimates under which such matters appear is indeed surprising. The Public Record Office and the Register House in Edinburgh serve the purposes of the law as well as those of scholarship. The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts and its National Register of Archives nest in the building of the Public Record Office. There are three Royal Commissions, for England, Scotland, and Wales, on Ancient and Historical Monuments, but the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments is part of the Ministry of Works, and another Ministry, that of Housing and Local Government, has its own schedule of buildings of special architectural or historical interest. The official histories of the late war are planned and written by two considerable staffs, one for the services and the other for the civil histories, under the control of the Cabinet Office. The Foreign Office has its own great series of diplomatic documents, and it was the Foreign Office which issued the Report of the Scarbrough Commission on Oriental, Slavonic, East European, and African Studies. The Ordnance Survey provides the maps which historians and archaeologists need, and other maps which give the results of their researches. Originally military, it is now under the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The India Office Library, in the Commonwealth Relations Office, is a major collection of printed books and manuscripts, both literary manuscripts and archives, issuing its own annual reports. I will say in passing that, not for mere reasons of prestige but for the good health of Oriental studies, it would be disastrous if these materials were moved away from their proximity to the other British centres of those studies.

There are Oriental exhibits, for the future of which we are sometimes a little anxious, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which belongs to the Ministry of Education. This great ministry has recently assumed the responsibility for the grants made by the state to research students in humanistic studies, but as we all know, its dealings with the universities are restricted in their scope. The universities depend on the government for varying, but everywhere very large, proportions of their revenues which they devote to research. Their presses, indeed, although they

are essential parts of the machinery of scholarship, finance themselves by trading as publishers. The Bodleian Library and the Cambridge University Library are among the six copyright libraries and thus they serve national purposes. The universities are self-governing bodies, jealous of their freedom. To preserve a viable freedom for them is the purpose of the delicately balanced interplay between the University Grants Committee of the Treasury and their own representative body, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

Besides the government departments, local authorities have their share in directing the flow of public money to research and learning. They too make grants to universities; they issue or subsidize learned publications; some of the greater public libraries and municipal museums are centres of research. There are now many county and municipal record-offices: some years ago a committee appointed by the Master of the Rolls debated their future, I believe not without liveliness.

After all these public authorities come a multitude of private bodies. The oldest are the great London City Companies. I need not remind you of their services: it will suffice to say that the Goldsmiths' Company, for whose hospitality we are again grateful this year, came to the rescue of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which still stands as the greatest single enterprise of linguistic research completed in our time anywhere in the world. The dictionary was also sponsored by the Philological Society, one of those voluntary societies for special studies of which the senior in age, the Society of Antiquaries, is presided over by our Secretary. There are special bodies for co-ordinating the work of certain groups of these societies, and our Academy, in its central position, gives them support, either by grants or by other means. I may instance the efforts in which we joined, although unsuccessfully, to obtain for them as well as for ourselves some mitigation of the recent increases in the postal charges for parcels containing books. We have before us the problem of how those societies can be best assisted which depend in the first instance on financial support from special localities or regions.

To complete this over-simplified enumeration of the ways in which this country pays for its scholarship I must mention two more types of private body. First come the great foundations. For two of these we are now acting, as distributing agents, for special purposes. Finally there are great business firms. One of them has promoted a general history of technology on a large scale, and has also made a grant to the Ashmolean

Museum for the purchase of early coins from the Lockett collection.

Our Charter tells us, with an inelegant use of language, that the objects of the Academy are the promotion of the study of the moral and political sciences including history, philosophy, law, politics and economics, archaeology and philology. This evidently implies that other moral and political sciences may be included. Mrs. Webb's disappointment on her first visit must have been partly due to the proportionately small attention then paid by the Academy to the social sciences. They were expanding vigorously, and in this she herself was one of the leaders, but here, she wrote impatiently, 'it is typical that there is no section on Sociology—only Economics. Politics is assumed to be covered by History, ancient and modern.' The Academy is no longer open to exactly these criticisms; but it may well appear that our single section devoted to all the 'Economic and Social Sciences' gives them small representation. Some of the lectures and articles in our *Proceedings* belong to sociology, anthropology, jurisprudence, and political science; but those of our Fellows who are economists make little use of this medium of publication. In quantity and cost the British research work in economics surpasses that in any other of our subjects with the exception of archaeology, which is well represented in all our activities. The most recent issue of the *Register* of research in the social sciences stated there were in progress 1,035 greater or lesser 'pieces' of research under the auspices of the universities and of some sixty other organizations, learned societies, and trusts. The number of degree-dissertations on the stocks was 776. These are the measurements of an enormous field.

In many ways the research and publications in this field inevitably have their own peculiar arrangements. Official authorities are often directly interested and their direct participation in one way or another is often needed. Much of the raw material comes from official sources, such as the offices of the Registrar General and the Board of Trade. Some of our own Fellows have done some of their most valuable work as members of Royal Commissions. When the government appointed commissions and committees during the late war to survey various branches of study, one of the committees (with our then President, Sir John Clapham, as its chairman) dealt with the social sciences. It recommended the fostering of social studies in the universities by means of ear-marked grants, which were consequently given and have since been absorbed into the general university block-

grants. It did not recommend the creation of any new body parallel to the three great research councils, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Medical Research Council, and the Agricultural Research Council. For economics and some closely related matters (though it would be scarcely inaccurate to say for economics alone) it found in existence as a going concern a strong independent body established in 1938, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research. This was formed by private initiative and has been financed partly by business firms, partly by the great foundations and also, to a limited extent and for specific purposes, by public funds. It has conducted research both by its own staff and in collaboration with the universities. Its finances have been of the same order of magnitude as our own, that is if we include in our own all the money which we receive from the government in order to pass it on to societies and institutes. Up to a point the position of the N.I.E.S.R. is like that of another voluntary body engaged in special social studies, the Royal Institute for International Affairs. Some of the many activities of this latter body are concerned with forming opinion and influencing policy rather than furthering knowledge; it has a certain association with the University of London, and in some other ways it is *sui generis*, but it draws, though in different proportions, on similar sources for its learned work.

These are the outlines of a structure which is truly Gothic in its wealth of irregular detail. We all know from experience how different it is from the simple and symmetrical systems of some other countries which have a single ministry for the arts and sciences, an academy with official status and functions, and articulated central research funds. When we explain British institutions to foreign visitors we do indeed often say that, although no one would ever have planned them in the forms to which they have grown, we succeed in making them work. In this instance we can say this sincerely, and I believe we escape some difficulties which characterize systems more rational than ours. The voluntary societies have great freedom and show much initiative and spontaneity; there are ministers and civil servants and academic administrators who appreciate these qualities, and we are glad to have such friends. We do all know, however, that our arrangements—we cannot say our organization, or even our 'set-up'—make heavy demands on the time and energies of many of our scholars. Unfortunately the authorities which make grants of money sometimes have to refuse them.

Those who apply for grants have to know the ropes. They must take part in meetings, correspondence, elections, and social engagements, all of them things which too easily become ends in themselves.

Other kinds of business as well as our own kind have become too burdensome in these ways, but we have some special problems of our own. One of them comes to our notice if we compare the arrangements for our own studies with those for the natural sciences. Some of the institutions which I have mentioned, notably the universities, have to do equally with both these great fields. Others, originally concerned with both, have been divided into two branches, like the British Museum in Bloomsbury and the British Museum (Natural History) in South Kensington, which still have the same Trustees, the same Standing Committee and some other organs of co-operation. Some of those which operate only on one side of the dividing line are parallel to similar institutions on the other: we ourselves, for instance, may compare ourselves, though modestly, with the Royal Society. Specialized societies like the Pipe Roll Society or the Royal Asiatic Society resemble the societies for the separate natural sciences. Some, like the Royal Geographical Society and the Royal Statistical Society, operate in both fields. But there are remarkable contrasts. We have, for instance, no periodical that can be compared with the weekly *Nature*. Sectional bodies like the Classical Association and the Historical Association do not appeal to popular opinion with more than a fraction of the power of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. We have no regular means of influencing the policy of governments or of parties; but the Advisory Committee on Scientific Policy and the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee are strong and experienced bodies.

There is another difference between the two branches of organization for knowledge, one which may in part result from these deficiencies on our side, but which may be more deeply rooted in the nature of things. Applications for grants of money, from whatever source, appear very often to be bolder and more confident when they are for the benefit of science and technology than when they have to do with our concerns. Scientific departments build and scrap enormous machines at the expense of hundreds of thousands of pounds, while librarians contrive to patch up their worn-out textbooks and students stand in a queue so that one book may do the work of ten. We are in no danger of being charged with megalomania, and φιλοκαλοῦμέν

τε γὰρ μετ' εὐτελείας is a comfortable reflection, but there is micromania too, and we may have no right to the claim φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας.

In more ways than one we are compelled to ask whether the organization of our studies is satisfactory. In the first place very few of the many bodies that I have mentioned can afford to carry on their work to their own satisfaction, and some of the most important of them believe that they need new or improved machinery for putting their needs before an already hard-pressed Treasury. There are even signs that outside bodies may think it necessary to come to the rescue of those now charged with the social and other studies which we exist to promote. I do not know whether that is a reasonable interpretation of a recent announcement that the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research will in the future begin to make grants for the social sciences, or of the hope, which we sometimes hear expressed, that some at least of the social sciences will be included in the scope of a comprehensive national science library. Great projects for new work in natural science necessarily raise problems of education, training, and social organization which cannot be solved without the help of various social sciences, and they sometimes involve problems in which historians and philologists have a contribution to make. You will remember that we were able a few years ago to co-operate satisfactorily with the Royal Society in preparing a pamphlet on the transliteration of the Slavonic languages. That is an example on a small scale. I believe that in some large matters we may need to undertake wider responsibilities if we are to be equal to those which we already bear.

Some of our Fellows have publicly supported a proposal for a new authority to apply to the Treasury on behalf of the great national museums and galleries in something like the way in which the University Grants Committee applies to it for the universities. This plan is less ambitious than some that have been more or less definitely formulated by private individuals. It covers part of the same ground with another which has found favour with some of our number and with bodies expert in the matter, for an authority to provide grants for all museums, including those which belong to local government authorities and to private trustees. For the present it is not our business as an Academy to pronounce on these proposals, but there are some principles relevant to them which our experience has taught us. First, we need more effective machinery, but secondly if possible

it ought to be made simpler. It ought not to multiply bodies to co-ordinate the work of those which already exist. That would be to exact still more of the time and energy of the people qualified to direct it. Academic work has already to a considerable degree undergone what is called the managerial revolution, but academic people are rightly reluctant to entrust too much power to the new academic bureaucracy. It is not only that we fear the deterioration of academic standards of quality, or the squandering of effort on futile investigations. To insist too much on these fears may well have a negative and sterilizing effect, but we shall not appear 'lifeless and derelict' so long as our work is positive and creative. Through the verbiage of the memoranda, the agenda, and I will add the Annual Addresses, we see the search and discovery, the formulation and solution of problems, the excavating, the computing, the deciphering, the textual emendations, and the economic and social analysis. We are here to do our best for great numbers of workers, and especially for the enthusiasts. An orderly and even tranquil atmosphere may be suitable at headquarters, but the army's task is mobile warfare.