PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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IN expressing with deep sincerity my sense of obligation to you for electing me for a fourth time to the high office of President of the Academy, I am more than ever conscious of the great responsibility that falls upon those who direct your affairs. I hope that one can infer from your action that you approve in the main the manner in which they have been conducted during the last year. For this I am even more than usually indebted to my colleagues, the Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer, the Secretary, the Advisory Committee, and the Council, for I was absent in the United States during the autumn. There I took your greetings to an older sister, the Philosophical Society, during its Fall session at Philadelphia, where many kind words were spoken of your activities. I found also that scholars in the United States were facing many of the same difficulties with which we have to deal in a world in which society is undergoing a rapid transformation. They have, indeed, some problems from which we are fortunately free. But our own special cares have certainly not grown less since I first took office, and I hope that you will pardon me if I recur today to the themes which occupied my attention when I first had the honour of addressing you.

You have just approved the distribution of nearly £5,000 amongst a number of learned societies and scholarly projects. These grants are for the most part small ones and would generally be of little avail if those who profit by them did not possess larger resources from endowments and subscriptions. But the endowments are now worth only half as much as before the war and the subscriptions are paid by men and women whose real incomes have been similarly reduced. Though private benefaction still exists, as is shown by the welcome gifts which we have received during the last year, it languishes from the same cause which afflicts us all. Consequently, the contributions of the Academy are of great importance. In some cases they make all the difference between life and death. In nearly all cases we could add considerably to the production of learned work if we could make larger grants to those who are so much in need. In the rare cases where we are not satisfied that those whom we help are doing

their utmost to help themselves, we do not fail to take the appropriate action.

This year we have subjected the requests made to us to an even more rigorous scrutiny than usual. Yet we had not the means in many cases to give such assistance as the circumstances warranted. Applications are greater in number than ever before and it seems likely that they will continue to increase both in quantity and amount. For we receive from many sources much evidence that the difficulties which scholars have to meet are likely to increase rather than to diminish. Those who have the good fortune to own their accommodation, or occupy it on long lease, are faced with steadily rising costs of maintenance. Those who have no such advantage have the greatest difficulty in finding any accommodation which they can possibly afford. Some of our oldest and most distinguished societies have only been saved from almost complete paralysis by the action of the University of London in founding the new Institute of Classical Studies. We will all wish great success to this new venture and hope that it may meet the needs of classical scholars throughout the whole of Britain.

But accommodation is only one problem. In addition the cost of secretarial assistance and printing continues to rise, and, if that of paper shows a welcome fall, it is still far higher than before the war. A greater number of books are set up by the printers in Britain than in any other country, not even excepting the United States, but for the most part they do not add much to the activities in which we are interested. It is, indeed, fortunately true that there is a far greater demand for scholarly works among the general public than before the war. But many of the publications which we assist are of a kind that only devoted scholars can appreciate and these, if, perhaps, larger in number, are poorer than those of previous generations. Yet these publications are indispensable to scholars if they are to be able to build up the fabric of learning in a scientific and orderly manner. 'Learning', wrote Thomas Fuller three hundred years ago, 'hath gained most by those books by which the printers have lost.'

Moreover much is being written by scholars, particularly the younger scholars, which cannot obtain publication at all. In more than one field of study the result has been that there is a tendency to write more popular and ephemeral articles which can find a place in journals with a wider appeal than those devoted to a true discipline. Meanwhile the journals that can really claim the title 'learned' have to be reduced in size and to appear at increasingly longer intervals.

To illustrate this deplorable fact let me quote from a letter which reached us concerning the position of journals of societies which are surely of outstanding importance if an understanding of our culture and civilization is to survive. It is written by the Secretary of the Joint Committee of Greek and Roman Societies, which includes the Hellenic Society, the Roman Society, the Classical Association, the British School at Athens, and the British School at Rome.

'The appended figures', she writes, 'show how much it has been necessary, in spite of the utmost economy in production, to reduce the size of journals since the war, even though subscriptions to all our journals (except the Papers of the British School at Athens) have been raised. This reduction in size makes it impossible to publish important new material and investigations quickly, thus both retarding the progress of scholarship and causing on occasion serious hardship to individual scholars, especially to the young. . . . As time goes on the waiting lists, already covering several years, will inevitably become still longer, and research will thus be increasingly discouraged.'

In another field of great importance in which we have a record unsurpassed by that of any other country there is a report of similar difficulties. The Royal Asiatic Society, to which the Academy has over a long period made substantial contributions, claims that 'in spite of the grant of £300 the Society still lacks permanent means to enlarge its Journal, bind the books in its library, remunerate its staff adequately or engage the extra assistance it badly requires'. I need hardly insist on the importance of maintaining research in Asiatic studies at the highest level or enlisting in their service those who have devoted their lives to Asiatic countries. Other societies have been facing similar problems which they have only overcome in part by the energy and devotion of their officers and supporters.

In the field of Archaeology we have been able to give substantial help because we possess special funds for that purpose. There are still great opportunities to be seized. An example is the splendid success of Miss Kenyon's work in Palestine which we have been glad to assist to the utmost of our resources. But we need new funds so that cultural co-operation with the three Asiatic members of the Commonwealth can be continued and extended. During this century at any rate, we used our position there to protect and study the monuments of the ancient civilizations which are now adapting themselves to a new role in the world. We have still much to give and much to learn by co-operation

with the new states that have grown up under our aegis and with which we now have such friendly relations. Should we not hope that we may see there, before too long an interval of time, centres of study and research such as we maintain in Rome, Athens, Ankara, and Iraq?

If I were to survey the other disciplines which are represented in the Academy I would in nearly all cases have to tell a similar tale. Yet never was the world in greater need of objective and scholarly study of its past history and present civilization. Peoples in all countries, whether in a Europe threatened with new and imperfectly understood dangers, or in an Asia and Africa that are being transformed by the impact upon them of Western ideas and technical skill, or in the new worlds across the oceans that are assuming new responsibilities and burdens, all are eager to understand more of the origins and nature of the forces on which their own fate depends. It is inevitable that such a demand should be met by men who refuse to acknowledge the limitations of their learning and produce answers to problems which attract by their simplicity and receive an attention which more accurate and scientific assessments cannot hope to obtain. No doubt these surveys do some real service in insisting on the interdependence of different cultures and ways of life. But their authors are prone to peddle their own nostrums disguised under a cloak of selected facts from the storehouse of learning.

In these conditions it is more than ever necessary to maintain the standards of scholarship. In the long run this can only be done by the assiduity and conscience of the whole body of scholars. We would all agree, I am sure, that the general level of scholarship has been immensely raised during the last two generations. Certainly that is true in the field of studies with which I am most familiar and I believe that most of you would testify in the same way. But if this advance is to continue scholars must be provided with the necessary means to pursue their common purpose. Their journals, publications, meetings, and lectures are a necessary part of the process by which their scholarship bears fruit. It is surely one of the main duties of the Academy to do all in its power to assist them at this time.

I may add here that I have been concerned at the inability of British scholars to take part in representative meetings and celebrations in foreign countries. The Academy itself is often invited to be represented at such gatherings, but only rarely does it feel justified in providing funds for that purpose. Other bodies have similar difficulties and there is a sensible loss in the prestige and

influence of British scholarship. It will often be found that small countries, with much smaller resources than our own, fulfil the obligations of international co-operation in such matters more effectively than we are able to do.

We have to remember, however, that the need which we feel so strongly is one which affects all those who are concerned with scholarship. The universities are facing a difficult five years and their efficiency and even their solvency depends in part on developments over which they have themselves little control. Another example of the disastrous effect of the present distribution of the national income is seen in the position of the British Museum, on whose welfare all scholars depend. We must all have read with admiration the brilliant survey in *The Times* of the 200 years of its history, but our pride in a great institution was accompanied by sorrow, and, I am sure, indignation, at the straits to which it had been reduced by the refusal to provide adequate funds for its maintenance and development. It should surely be a first charge on the State expenditure on learning and culture, its buildings restored and provided with adequate staff, and above all its library given the funds to make it in all respects equal to its task and its reading-room made open to scholars for longer hours than is now possible. I cannot help feeling that its situation has not been brought sufficiently to the attention of the public.

We live now in wnat can be called without irony a welfare state. The national dividend has been redistributed so that the material needs of the people can be cared for in a manner impossible in previous generations. Nor is the State unmindful of the fact that it has also the duty of fostering intellectual and artistic activities, a task which in the past could be left largely to those who had a superfluity of riches. Its principal officials, themselves for the most part men of education and culture, readily admit the importance of the claims which we make. They desire, I am sure, to do all that is possible to help scholars to meet their difficulties. But naturally their scale of values is not ours, and they are the servants of a democracy which has never rated very highly the activities in which we take part. The material needs of the time press urgently for solution. We live in a perpetual cycle of crises and emergencies.

Nevertheless I hope that we shall be able to demonstrate the practical wisdom of increasing the contribution of the State to the interchange of knowledge between scholars. The result to be obtained from so small a fraction of the national income is so

important, the failure to arrest the decline in publication so serious, the necessity of international collaboration so obvious, that it is difficult to believe that all help will be refused.

In order that we may carry out with efficiency and judgement our task of making these needs fully known we must see that our own house is in order. So far as our own funds are concerned we have recently made changes which have given us a small but sensible improvement in the yield of our investments. As regards the demands submitted to us by others, these are now scrutinized by three bodies before decisions are made about them. I am not sure, however, that we make the fullest use of the knowledge and experience of the Sections before whom in the first instance such demands are placed. We might, perhaps, hold with advantage a special meeting of the Chairmen of Sections to consider these problems. We should also be able to look to them to survey the special difficulties of the studies represented in their Sections and consider where the Academy can best contribute to their solution either in its own publications or through those of other societies. Indeed, all Fellows of the Academy can assist us by calling attention to those needs which they feel most strongly and supplying us with the facts necessary to secure their alleviation.

That the Academy might have a rather broader base when carrying out these duties was one of the reasons why the Council submitted to you today the suggestion of making special arrangements for the position of the more senior Fellows. They did so in response to requests from Fellows who were disappointed when the question was not brought forward last year, and, when a definite plan was proposed, it secured the support of a large majority of the Sections. I have no doubt that the Privy Council will authorize the necessary changes in our bye-laws so that next year we can act under them. Had we not done something of this kind we should in a short time have found it impossible to elect many who had a full claim to belong to our body and we may hope that we have found a method to strengthen it and make it more representative. I have heard this problem periodically discussed at our meetings for nearly a quarter of a century and I think that we should feel satisfaction that we have at last obtained at least a partial solution of it.

In the evening of the day on which we held our last general meeting we celebrated in the Goldsmiths' Hall our fiftieth anniversary. I think that those who were present felt that the occasion had been a fitting one to which we could look back with pleasure and pride. I wish that we could more often meet together in this

way. But there are other methods by which we can show the corporate spirit of the Academy and I hope that it will be increasingly in evidence during the coming years.

For no one can survey the world at this time without realizing that the greatest dangers which beset scholars are not the material ones on which I have dwelt today. In that part of it which is under a totalitarian régime scholars are not merely wholly dependent on the State for their means of livelihood but are subjected to coercion if they say or publish anything which seems to throw doubt on the principles and actions of their masters. That was to be expected; but in the stress of the struggle there are signs that in the free world also the demands of the State on scholars are tending to go beyond what is necessary to secure objective teaching and research. It is, of course, legitimate to make sure that the resources of the State are not used to serve the purposes of an ideology which makes a fine art of the process of penetration. But in so doing it is more than ever necessary to be watchful that the independence of true scholars is in no way infringed. There are some who believe that the acceptance of assistance from the State necessarily imperils the freedom of thought and expression on which all our studies depend. In this country at least I can see no signs of any such danger. Certainly the progress and expansion of various fields of learning depends in part on the view which is taken of their usefulness by the State. But we are fortunate in the fact that in this country, more I think than in any other, those with political and economic power are as anxious as we are to preserve the right to free inquiry wherever it may lead. This wisdom comes from the long heritage of freedom which we have enjoyed. In maintaining it we give an example to the world which is not the least of our contributions at this time. In promoting the extension of learning the Academy must never for a moment lose sight of this fundamental principle.