

THE BULLETIN

OF THE

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

COLLEGE NEWS

PRESIDENT'S PRESS

The last few weeks have been hectic for Officers and staff at Belgrave Square because of the debate on the White Paper on 22 February. The report of our Working Party had luckily been published beforehand so it was in the hands of 200 or so MP's who belong to the All-Party Mental Health Group. We also met a few of this group the week before the debate, and some of you may have seen press notices following our press conference. The main public debate has so far been about the controversial issue of a multi-disciplinary panel providing mandatory second opinions for certain so far unspecified categories of 'irreversible, hazardous or unproven' treatments when they are to be given to detained patients against their will. The pro's and con's of all this are discussed elsewhere and there is no need for me to go over it all again. It is not

difficult to see the issue as part of a human rights campaign against professionals and link it in a paranoid way with the question of matters of clinical judgment being referred to the Health Commissioner (Ombudsman). I often teach that all paranoid ideas are true (because patients unconsciously engineer the situation that makes them suspicious), so I leave it to the reader to guess how far he thinks this point of view applies to us. It is a pity that many more important issues worthy of calmer discussion between psychiatrists and those who represent our patients in and out of the House of Commons may easily get lost in a heated debate on this one issue.

I am writing this at the end of March and having what may be described as second thoughts on the White Paper. I have been struck by the emergence of a

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