

E.C.T. CURE OR CURSE

(with apologies to Hilaire Belloc)

Electric treatment is the cure
For everyone both rich and poor.
It cheers you up, it calms you down,
It takes away your worried frown,
It fattens you if you're too thin,
It even helps to cleanse your skin.
It moves your bowels, clears your head
And stops you wishing you were dead.
What scientific sceptic could
Question anything so good?
But there are some who say it's bad
To ill-treat those who're feeling sad,
By giving artificial fits
Which then deprive them of their wits.
It's all (they say) one of the tricks
Of those who practise politics,
Reducing non-conformity
By use of electricity
(Which is a very dangerous force
As everybody knows, of course,

And never should be put, they think
Into the hands of some old shrink).
For something subject to abuse
Can never be of any use.
If you should happen to suggest
Submitting data to the test
And setting up a double-blind
To see if anyone can find
Whether it works, and why and when
And if it's safe, you'll find that then
They'll shout you down, they'll be as one
For one thing they're agreed upon
Is that the facts would interfere
With the opinions they hold dear.

O let us never, never doubt
What nobody is sure about.

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CORRESPONDENCE

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT*

DEAR SIR,

I am writing to express concern about certain trends in the policy of the College. I am referring to manpower requirements for teaching and non-teaching districts, and the part teaching hospitals should play in the provision of psychiatric services. I believe a Working Party is now considering these issues, but I feel that a wider debate within the College might be appropriate. I know from discussions with colleagues in different parts of the country that my misgivings are widely shared, but the views expressed here are my own, and not those of any organized group.

I can think of four basic models for a University department of psychiatry:

- (1) A Professorial Unit of, say 10–15 beds, with an 'academic' role, i.e. primarily teaching and research, and staffed by the University. If the main teaching hospital has a sizeable psychiatric unit, the rest of the beds would be—in terms of

staff and clinical work—part of the district services.

- (2) A University department of substantial size (whether in general or psychiatric hospital) operating on a selective basis, i.e. without district service responsibility, and seeing their role as 'academic', with service functions secondary to the academic ethos and interests of the department. The major part of the staff would hold academic appointments, with a small (below what is considered 'normal' for units undertaking a full district service) contribution from the NHS.
- (3) A University department which is part of the district service for clinical purposes with a 'normal' or average NHS medical complement. Additionally, it also has University appointed staff. To the extent that psychiatrists in University posts take on clinical commitments, they relieve NHS staff, allowing them time for academic pursuits.

* President, then Professor W. Linsord Rees, agreed to the publication of this letter in the *Bulletin*.