

W. H. H. H.

contacts

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TALKING TO...



THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

by Tom Savage

Few casting directors would 'see' Eoghan O Caoimh in the role of a chief executive. He lacks the tight lipped, gimlet-eyed sharpness of feature. He looks, on the contrary, like a prototype of a favourite uncle. In talking about his career, he constantly attributes successful ventures to team work, and is unstinting in his praise of the results of that team work. 'I think it's true to say,' he comments of his present preoccupation, 'and it has been said publicly, that since the Dublin Health Authority was set up in 1960, it has had a very human face, and a very humane approach to people who are ill, or in need, or suffering. That was even said in the Dail by Mr. MacEntee, who wasn't a man to hand around bouquets.'

He is concerned that this human face would continue to be shown, despite growth in the organisation. 'I'm always concerned to prevent people from being sent from Billy to Jack,' he says. 'All big organisations have a tendency for people to say "Oh, I don't deal with that, you'll have to see somebody else".'

A small instance of this continuing concern that people should obtain their rights with a minimum of difficulty is a draft of a new booklet, a Guide to the Health Services, which he has to hand. He disclaims credit for the booklet. 'It wasn't my initiative. It shows the helpful humane approach of the officials on my staff.'

His sense of being strongly supported by a team lessens the traditional loneliness of the chief executive position for him. 'It's lonely,' he admits, 'in the sense that, as President Truman said, "the buck stops here"'. But such a situation rarely arises, as most problems are ironed out at meetings of the Management Team, so that there are very few bucks to deal with.'

Born in the parish of Rathmore, Co. Kerry, Mr. O Caoimh early became aware of the Irish revival, for his primary school teachers proudly reminded their pupils that they had been born in the birthplace of Eoghan Ruadh O Súilleabháin, and Aoghagáin O Raghallaigh. Is this the reason for his use of the Irish form of his name?

'Quite frankly, no', he says. 'When I was County Secretary in Donegal, just after the war the County Council was producing turf for a great portion of Ireland, and at the time, the Secretary had to put his name personally, to all of the paychecks. So, every week, I had to sign anything between four and five thousand cheques, for County Council workers. And, of course, 'E. O C' is much easier to write than E. O'Keefe.'

St. Brendan's College, Killarney afforded him his secondary education, and, at university he achieved a first class honours degree in Ancient Classics. Subsequently he studied Law and was called to the Bar in 1948.

'I was telling my daughter, who's now starting her Leaving Cert. final year, I remember in the summer of 1934, when I got my degree, day after day, answering ads. in the newspapers that said "Teacher required". That went on for the whole month of August, and not one reply did I get.'

Photos by J. Ledwidge

Balked of a job, he embarked on an M.A. thesis, only to pick up a vacancy as a teacher of classics in Knockbeg College, Co. Carlow some months later. He was replacing not one, but two teachers, and the work was heavy. 'I remember each evening after the day's classes I had to lie down for about a half an hour, I was so exhausted.'

When the National Health Insurance Society was set up, he joined, following a tough interview. Today, he recalls that at the tail-end of the interview, he was taken over a list of historical figures and asked questions about them. On the most obscure figures in world history, the candidate shone. Finally, the name 'William Martin Murphy' was produced for his comments. 'I had never heard of him,' he says, laughing. 'That shows you. I might have known world history, but I'd never heard of the man before — a significant commentary on the way history was then taught.'

He got the job, and spent four years in it, until 1940 when he was commissioned in the Regiment of Pearse

and was called up for army service — a period he now regards as among the happiest years of his life. Following this, he became Secretary of Donegal County Council, and then Dublin County Secretary.

In 1950, he became Assistant City and County Manager, and in 1957, he was assigned wholly to health duties, becoming Chief Executive Officer of the Dublin Health Authority when it was set up in 1960.

References to his family crop up regularly in his conversation. Outside of work, too, he is interested in sport, playing a good deal of golf until a heart attack two years ago. He hopes to return to the links in the near future. 'I was down to a nine handicap,' he relates, 'For just one night! On Saturday, I came in with a good score — I'd been 11. They provisionally adjust on Saturday night, but on Sunday, the handicapping committee met, and they said, "no ten".'

Looking back over his varied career, he is loth to pick out specific achievements, although he unwillingly cites a

couple of happenings, due to his work, which cause him a certain pride.

'One, is that I got a children's library going in Dun Laoghaire. Dun Laoghaire Library had a reading room, and I remember going out there as a young, enthusiastic manager, seeing a few old boys sitting around with the racing papers. When I broached it first, it was no go, but with the support of an enthusiastic Cathaoirleach we converted the reading room into a make-shift children's library, and it was eventually extended. The other thing I remember wasn't to my personal credit — more a matter of inspiration by the Holy Ghost. In the early sixties there was a growing demand from U.S.A. couples to adopt children in our care, and I suddenly said 'why not have an adoption society of our own?'

The resulting society, St. Louise has had considerable success, and is now the second largest in the country.

Is he, then, a happy man?

'Oh yes,' he says, with an air of being too busy to have given it much thought.

'Oh, I think I am.'

Councillor John Sweeney represents Wicklow County Council on the Board. He is also a member of Arklow Urban District Council, Arklow Harbour Board and County Wicklow Association for the Mentally Handicapped.

Councillor Sweeney is Chairman of No. 1 Visiting Committee which visits the Board's hospitals and homes in County Wicklow and also Vergemount Hospital, Clonskeagh. The Welfare Home in Bray and the recently opened St. Broc's, Clonskeagh are also visited by this committee.

Because of his deep interest in the welfare of the elderly Councillor Sweeney is particularly pleased with the development of welfare homes in the Board's area. He sees them as an opportunity for providing frail elderly

MEET THE BOARD . . .



Councillor Sweeney

people with the means of keeping in contact with their own environment. 'It should be the function of a health board,' he says 'to see that elderly people live a contented and happy life as near as possible to the environment in which they have lived all their lives'.

It is to be expected that a man who is concerned about the elderly who cannot always look after themselves is also very much concerned about another section of our community who cannot fend for themselves — our children. Councillor Sweeney considers the Child Welfare service, should be the Board's top priority. He believes that if the health boards pay proper attention to the health of children from birth there will be healthier adults in the future and less need for hospital care.

RECENT DEATHS

We were shocked to hear of the tragic deaths of two of our doctors. They are Dr. Timothy J. Coffey, M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O., M.D., and Dr. Brian Laverty, M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O., D.P.M.

Dr. Coffey (62) who was a Corkman, was married and had a young family. He was appointed D.M.O. in Finglas/Glasnevin in

1944. He subsequently transferred to Marino district and in 1961 he took up duty in Lisburn Street where he has worked ever since.

He served for many years on the Board's Drug Formulary Committee where his knowledge and wide experience were an invaluable help to the work of the Committee. He was a deservedly popular man and an efficient doctor.

Dr. Laverty (36) was a native of Co. Down. He was married with two sons aged 5 and 3 years. He worked in many hospitals in Dublin

and Northern Ireland before coming to St. Brendan's as Registrar in 1968. Shortly afterwards, he was appointed psychiatrist there. In 1972 he took up duty as senior psychiatrist in Newcastle Hospital, Co. Wicklow. He was very well liked by both colleagues and patients.

The Board has lost two loyal and devoted officers and their colleagues two good friends. We extend our deepest sympathy to their widows and families. May they rest in peace.

NEW HOSPITAL AT RATHDRUM

by P. J. Swords

On Friday 26th September, the new Hospital at St. Colman's, Rathdrum, was officially opened by Mr. Godfrey Timmins, T.D., Chairman of Wicklow County Council and Chairman of Wicklow Local Health Committee and a former Member of the Board. Mr. Timmins was deputising at short notice for Mr. Richard Barry, T.D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health who was unavoidably absent due to the death of his colleague Mr. Henry Kenny, T.D., Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance.

Following the official opening the new buildings were blessed by Most Reverend Dr. James Kavanagh, Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin, assisted by Venerable A.H. Frazer, Archdeacon, Glendalough and Very Reverend J. Callan, P.P., Rathdrum. The ceremonies were followed by a Mass in the Assembly Hall at which His Lordship was the Chief Celebrant. A group from the Artane Boys Band provided a fanfare at the arrival of Bishop Kavanagh and later during the celebration of the Mass.

The new Hospital at St. Colman's comprises two single storey inter-connecting buildings providing accommodation for 86 persons in small ward units. The inter-connecting corridor between the ward block and the service block has been designed to provide day space. The service block provides accommodation for kitchen, patients' dining room, Oratory, Matron's and Clerks Offices and staff dining and change room. The new blocks have been linked by a corridor to the former St. Kevin's Unit which was constructed approximately 30 years ago as a T.B. Hospital. This Unit has been extensively reconstructed and the accommodation for patients and staff has been brought up to the standards in the new buildings. Here accommodation is also provided in small ward units for about 60 patients.

During the reconstruction of the former St. Kevin's Unit a new wing

was provided for physiotherapy, occupational and industrial therapy. It is notable that this is the first purpose built Unit for these services in the Board's area. The cost of the new Hospital is approximately £600,000 and an outstanding feature of this project, which is the largest undertaking to date by the Board, is the extent to which the local Voluntary Organisations and individuals have contributed to provide for furniture, fittings, equipment and a new verandah.

St. Colman's is the site of the former Workhouse for the East Wicklow area and was completed over 130 years ago at the time when these buildings were being constructed throughout the country. In this age of modern technology and improved communications we still wonder how these large complexes were built in so many locations throughout the country and within such a short space of time. Most of these Workhouses were strategically located on spacious sites and Rathdrum is no exception. The extensive grounds available there enabled the Architect, Mr. J. Inglis, to design a single storey structure thus adding a further amenity to the old and infirm persons being accommodated.

Shortly after the setting up of our own Government the administration of the Workhouse was given to the charge of the Community of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God who are well known in the Dublin area with foundations at Raheny, Maryfield, Chapelizod and St. Colman's, Rathdrum. Many of the Board's Officers will have become familiar during the past few years of the very dilapidated condition in the old buildings at Rathdrum and I am sure they will join with us in the tribute paid by Mr. D. O'Flynn, Chairman, at the opening ceremonies when he thanked Sr. Philomena, Matron and the Community and staff for their heroic work over the years in such bad working conditions.

We are indeed happy to say that these are now an historical fact only. We also join in the thanks expressed by Bishop Kavanagh to the Voluntary Organisations and individuals who contributed so much materially and of their time to the welfare of the patients at St. Colman's. We would hope that in future issues of 'Contact' that we will be reporting on the development of the Community services based at St. Colman's and serving the East Wicklow area. We also join in the tributes paid by the Board Members and public representatives at the official opening to the Main Contractors Martin Turley & Co. Ltd., Portarlinton and Hugh O'Neill & Co. Ltd., Dublin and the various Sub-Contractors for the excellence of the workmanship throughout the new buildings.

W.H.O. FELLOWSHIP

Congratulations to Con Healy, Supervising Health Inspector, who has been awarded a fellowship of the World Health Organisation.

A W.H.O. fellowship is granted on the recommendation of his government, to a person who, given the opportunity to study abroad, would increasingly contribute towards furthering the health objectives of his government and of W.H.O.

Con will spend one month in 1976 studying Food Hygiene Education.

RECENT STAFF TRANSFERS

Colm McQuaile, Section Officer has transferred from Personnel to St. Loman's. Tom Curran has been promoted to Section Officer, Personnel and has been replaced in Children Section by Della Horkan, A.S.O., I.S.A.

Paddy McGrath, Assistant Section Officer has transferred from St. Loman's to Child Psychiatry, Usher's Island and Brian O'Malley, A.S.O. from St. Loman's to Accounts.



'No, it's not a cheque for £13, nurse. Your deductions are more than your salary so it's a BILL for £13.'

IN DENMARK THE COMMUNITY CARES

by Eileen Larkin

During a holiday in Denmark this year I took the opportunity of seeing how the Danes looked after the old and the disabled.

The impression I got from my various contacts with people involved in the health services was that there was more money for the services there than we have here.

They also seem to be more highly organised. Maybe this involves a lot more paper work, but if the service is efficient, surely the end justifies the means.

The Danes are imaginative in their use of resources. A disused hotel is converted to a geriatric hospital or a convalescent home, old hotels in seaside resorts making ideal homes. Old schools have been turned into residential centres for handicapped people who can go out to work during the day.

Secure Area

Bystenovneparkin, situated in beautiful parkland beside an old established district on the outskirts of Copenhagen, consists of apartment blocks, single storey blocks and a nursing home built around a health centre. It is called a secure area. There are several of these secure areas where elderly or disabled persons can live independently in apartments, but in

ASTRA THEATRE GROUP
presents

'MANY YOUNG MEN OF TWENTY'

a play with music
by John B. Keane

In the Assembly Hall, St. James's Hospital,
on Tues. 2nd, Wed. 3rd, Thurs. 4th
December and Wed. 10th, Thurs. 11th,
Fri. 12th December at 8 p.m.

Admission 50p

PROCEEDS IN AID OF
HOSPITAL PATIENTS.

contact with a security centre. Checks are made to ensure the safety of the people living on their own.

Bystenovneparkin had seven seven-storey blocks with 76 apartments, 11 double and 65 single, in each. People who could cook for themselves and generally manage on their own lived there. Then there were four or five smaller single storey buildings with 52 apartments in each for people who were not fully able to look after themselves. The residents, some of whom were wheel-chair cases, live separately, but eat in a central dining-hall.

The residents all pay their pensions less a fixed amount each month. It is a very modern complex, but for the people living there, the important thing is that they know they are safe and secure.

There are daily checks to see that everything is in order, and at night security men patrol the roads and grounds.

Each resident has his own telephone connected directly to the local exchange in case of emergency.

Welfare Centre

In Korsør on the west coast of Zealand there is a very interesting welfare centre associated with a 65-bed geriatric hospital.

Alongside the hospital there are two blocks of flats for the elderly who receive a meals-on-wheels service from the hospital.

There is also a welfare unit which caters for disabled persons of all ages. This unit, which has every modern therapeutic facility, contains beautifully furnished apartments.

On another side of the hospital was a number of single storey dwellings, specially built for people living alone who were disabled but not in need of hospital care. The residents were able to live independently, but had the security of telephone connection with a central office.

All this development had taken place on the grounds of the original hospital, and the local people were very much involved. More than 200 of them worked in the centre. For the old people it was a living community, not a hospital or home shut off from the rest of the world.

STAFF REPORTS . . .

A home called Hamlet

In Elsinore I visited a home called Hamlet. This was originally built as a hotel, but the business failed, and it was converted into an Old Person's Home. The rooms, converted into apartments were very comfortable and had lots of personal belongings brought from the occupants' own homes.

The ballroom and some of the larger rooms had been converted to a Day Centre and occupational therapy and physiotherapy departments. The Day Centre clients could have chiropody, hairdressing and many other services as well as the usual types of occupational therapy and physiotherapy services.

I was introduced to some of the residents in their apartments and was impressed by the contented and cheerful demeanour.

Meals on Wheels and Home Helps

Of course, a large number of elderly people live in less sheltered conditions in their own community. These are cared for through a meals-on-wheels service and a very well developed home help service. Every person over 67 years living alone is entitled to at least two hours home help service each day. If they do not possess a telephone, one is installed free, thus ensuring immediate contact with their local home help office.

The overall impression you get in Denmark is the readiness of the administrators to be flexible in their dealings with the handicapped and the elderly. They don't just lay on a service and let the often confused old person see where he fits into it. Instead they build the service around the person's need. It seems a very human and civilised way of doing things.

Tight Squeeze in Romania

by Noel Kelly

The aircraft landed smoothly and slowly taxied to a halt in front of the airport terminal. As the gangway was moved into position at the plane's exit door, four armed and khaki clad figures ran from the cover of the airport building and took up positions around the silent Boeing. No, it wasn't a hi-jacking or sabotage but a security precaution against such actions, and it all happened on a sunny September morning at Constanta airport at the start of our 14-day holiday in Romania.

The first hour of our holiday was only concerned with passports, visas, baggage checks and personal friskings, but soon we were in our comfortable hotel which was to be home for the duration of our holiday. Generally it was a first-class hotel except at times the food bordered on the monotonous. It seemed that the chef had little imagination or limited capabilities, and many a silent prayer was whispered for the miracle of a Monica

Sheridan or Jimmy Flahive by Jackeen, Corkonian and Northern loyalist alike.

It was when we went to exchange our travellers cheques for Lei and Banai that the hard fact of how much the £ had dropped in value hit us where it hurt most. We got 33% less than expected!

The Black Sea was practically on our door-step, and the marvellous sunshine lured us there daily. On the beach we were regularly approached by locals asking us to sell our western clothes. Some of our men folk sold their well worn shirts for about £2 and the girls did great business selling their surplus tights from 60p. upwards.

A trip to town on the local trolley bus was both an experience and a hazard. It was the policy of each driver never to pass a stop or leave anybody behind. Stories are related about travel on buses in Paris and Rome but these are timid when compared with a trip on the 41A to Constanta.

No visit to Romania would be complete without a trip on the renowned Danube on which we were fortunate to spend two days cruising

and rowing, and partake of a traditional Carp lunch in which fish was the main ingredient in all the courses.

Bucharest, a city of two million inhabitants, is also a must for the tourist. Its six lane approach roads, huge squares, new architecture complementing the old and its many parks and open green spaces, all combine to make it a magnificent capital city.

Reluctantly we said good-bye at the end of a seemingly short two weeks. Will we go back again? For myself, perhaps. For others, definitely next year, with a trunk full of, yes, you've guessed, coloured shirts and St. Bernard tights!



From Abroad

BOTSWANA AND BACK

Sr. Kathleen Hanrahan of St. Colmcille's Hospital is back from Botswana. In the March issue of Contacts we told of Sr. Hanrahan's plans to set up a mobile clinic there and also establish a training centre. Her recommendations regarding these two proposals are contained in her report which has been approved by the Concern organisation and the Association for Personal Service Overseas, who sponsored her fact-finding tour, and the Botswana Government.

Kathleen worked with the regional medical team which served a population of 28,000 in North East Botswana. The villages are scattered and have less than 500 people and have no medical help at all. She found the people kindly, but suspicious of

government officials just like Irish country folk.

On one occasion she was invited to address Aldermen, Councillors and Chiefs of the Francis Town Council. As Botswana is not exactly in the forefront of the womens lib. movement this was quite an honour. Kathleen was told that Ireland was the first country to assess the need before pouring in money. They were as interested in the donor country as in the form of donation. It is hoped that CONCERN will provide the funds for a truck and this will be converted to a mobile dispensary by the Botswana Government, who are quite prepared to undertake some of the operational costs as well.

Family Welfare Educators

This new grade of health personnel is two years in existence in Botswana. It takes four years to train a nurse in

Botswana and as only 20 are turned out each year there is a gap in the nursing service which is being filled by these Family Welfare Educators. They are mostly village girls who are trained briefly in the area of mother and baby clinics and preventive health. They also are the link between the village and the regional medical team. With a view to making these girls more effective Kathleen has proposed that continuous in-service training be provided and a pilot scheme initiated.

Ireland has quite a lot to learn from Botswana. They do not have a geriatric problem as the old and young live together in an extended family unit. Particularly impressive is their sophisticated approach to nursing through philosophy and the humanities, consequently they make excellent nurses both in hospitals and on a district. The supervisor of nurse training has a science degree as well as her S.R.N. S.C.M. The nursing profession is autonomous and is structured alongside the medical profession rather than below it.

Kathleen is returning to Botswana in the new year to put her proposals into operation. Bon voyage Kathleen, and may we wish you the very best of luck.

SHORT STORY COMPETITION

The entry for our short story competition was small, but the quality of the stories submitted was quite good.

The judges, journalists Terry Prone and Tom Savage and your editor had a difficult task in trying to select a winner. Eventually they decided to share the prize between two stories of very different styles – *The Sacrifice* by Enda Halpin and *The Catcher* by Ronnie Heapes. Enda's story which appears in this issue is an evocative 'literary' type story, while Ronnie's is a fast moving magazine type yarn. Ronnie's story will be published in our next issue.

The judges' comments have been sent to all the contestants, and we would like to thank them for their efforts and hope they will make a go of the writing game.



Michael Griffin (left) Vice-Chairman of Astra Group, presents the prizes to the joint winners of the short story competition, Ronnie Heapes (centre) and Enda Halpin (right).

THE SACRIFICE

by Enda Halpin

He walked up and down the rows of desks, a fixed expression on his face, his eyes bloodshot, a nagging pain in his head. The day must be quiet again, no thought or questions, there wouldn't be anyone to answer them. Obediently they read books, drew lines, tackled sums. There was no sound but the rustling of pages, an occasional bout of coughing, nail boots scraping on the cement floor. They knew better than to give him reason to anger. There was something about the eyes, a slight trembling of the hands, a jarring edge to the voice.

Lately, the weather had become bitterly cold. The school shook to its foundations at the effect of a harsh east wind. The bare trees, wet fields, a constantly grey sky – all seemed to match the feeling within. It was dark when they went home each evening, but he kept the darkness inside.

He could not remember exactly when the change occurred. There were many days of enthusiasm and a perpetual one man show. Extra lessons for the County Scholarship, subjects not approached before secondary school – Latin, Greek, Geometry – strange sounds and designs – an examination for the poor. The school was never closed before five o'clock – followed by three hours homework – a time of exploration. He found the thought

process of young minds fascinating, their questions provoking, their hopes boundless. Opposition was intimidating and in the end overwhelming. Poverty was widespread, money had to be earned in field and factory. Someone had to pay the Brothers' fees, buy the books and feed the hungry. Money never came from books – everyone knew that. Fools never earned money.

He returned to the present. It was almost two o'clock. The idea of a breath of fresh air appealed to him, a walk around the fading poplars, now swaying violently in the growing storm. Instead he studied the mud on the floor tramped in from the playground.

He divided his time between the pub and solitary walks. His was a well known figure in O'Halloran's. He liked the place – its warmth and friendliness. He enjoyed the banter with the locals. They were naturally pleased that a man of such learning would take the time to speak with them. They never knew where he came from. He spoke one of those indeterminate accents that came from a change of area every few years. They were amazed at the extent of his knowledge. He told stories from every century of Irish history – he often recited the poetry of Yeats and Wordsworth. They knew he was a lonely

man. He rented a cottage a short distance from the school and he had no visitors.

Again he brought his mind back to the present. He walked over to the window, dug his hands deep into his pockets and watched the rain beat indifferently on the ground. The fire in the classroom was almost dead. He told Murphy to fetch coal from the shed. Rubbing his snotty nose with his sleeve, Murphy clambered unenthusiastically from his desk, grabbed the coal-bucket and disappeared. Soon the room was warm again with the heat of the fire. He got up from the table and collected the copy-books. He cringed at the sight of the many different colours, dog-eared pages, finger-stains and some scarcely legible scrawls. There was a time when this would have appalled him. However, for the sake of a few short years in their lives, and the few left in his own, he wasn't going to bother with the niceties. It was better to teach them the bare rudiments, something to help them in their poker games, an auction or a mart.

Three years ago he saw the advertisement in the paper: 'Teacher required for one room school: rural area. Apply Father Ryan.' He didn't hesitate. It was exactly what he wanted, the chance for an escape. He knew what he was doing, edging himself out of a rat-race which he could no longer believe in. Father Ryan's greeting three days later was cold and business-like. They had a long conversation. He

knew he was the only applicant – an instinctive knowledge. He was glad of this. He tried to hide the frayed patches of his well worn suit. The priest showed him the school – 23 desks, an old blackboard, two buckets and an old broom in the corner, a series of shelves full of old dusty copy-books. He was offered the position and accepted at once. It was, he decided, just the place to live and die in peace – surely this was the ultimate ambition of every just man?

He liked the area. The school was only a mile from the village, a conglomerate of 17 houses, including the church, two pubs, a grocery shop and the post office. There was a nearby river – he promised himself many leisurely fishing hours. The promise to rekindle in himself some of the fire now long extinguished was definite. He liked the group of poplars situated about 100 yards from the schoolroom.

He told the priest he would be there on the first of September.

He realised as time went on he couldn't fulfil that promise to himself. He was as he had been these last ten years – a man lost in his way, the chalk in his hand had long since lost its bite. He tried hard, however, to give these children something they might remember with pleasure. He would be satisfied if they could only count the cattle on the land. It would make him happy if one of these children would outwit an opponent at the mart because of something they had learnt from him. He knew, however, that nothing ever matched the excitement of teaching someone who shone from the rest, and nothing quite matched the sadness at knowing his teaching days were nearly over.

He glanced at his watch. It was now half-past three. He rang the bell and set them free. While some days were

worse than others, he knew there was still a gleam of hope. He watched them running wildly down the lane, across the fields like untamed goats, pushing one another in the wet grass, their bodies dripping like young eels. He tried to imagine their lives mapped out for years. Were there great plans or none at all?

He waited in the classroom until the fire died down. He went through the motions of correcting the sums, and planned the next days lessons. He studied the calendar, five weeks to Christmas. Perhaps he could plan a concert. Yes – that was a good idea. Tomorrow he would mention it. It would give them a chance to use their ingenuity, to overcome their shyness. He would try and instil in them the confidence they lacked. He tidied away chalk-pieces, cleaned the dust from the roll-books, locked the school, shivering slightly because of the cold and turned his back on the day.

Mental Handicap –

by F. J. Elliott

World Congress

A gathering of considerable interest to everyone concerned with the interests of the mentally handicapped took place in Dublin in September. It was the 6th World Congress of the National League of Societies for the Mentally Handicapped, and extended over a full week. Delegates from more than 40 countries attended – doctors, nurses, educationists, social workers, administrators and, most importantly, parents. There was a large attendance from Ireland evidencing the concern of all associated with the planning, provision and improvement of services for this section of the community to share ideas, experiences and problems with their counterparts from other countries.

For representatives of the Eastern Health Board it was interesting and instructive to hear of the state of development of services in countries as different, for example, as Sweden and Denmark from Iran and the Lebanon. As might be expected, there were major disparities. Availability of finance and of trained personnel over an extended period were naturally reflected in the picture coming from the richer and more settled countries: the problems to be overcome in less

fortunately situated areas were clearly of major proportions. Yet more than one speaker from the former group expressed the hope that the countries in which services were less well developed at present could learn from the mistakes of those who started well in advance of them.

How, it might be asked, does Ireland compare? The contributions of the representatives of the National Association of the Mentally Handicapped of Ireland, of the voluntary organisations which provide most of the services, of the Department of Health and of the health boards who presented papers, presided at discussions, and acted on discussion panels illustrated the concern with the needs and rights of the mentally handicapped which has been steadily growing and is being constructively applied.

This concern is, perhaps, best demonstrated by the number of local associations concerning themselves with the education, training, and placement of the mentally handicapped. In regard to meeting the needs of the handicapped, the extent of the work still to be done was not minimised to the Congress participants yet the recital of the report of progress

made in recent years and of the development programme presently in hand made impressive hearing.

Of the papers presented at the Congress of mainly local interest

'Priorities' – by Dr. J. P. A. Ryan, Medical Director of the St. John of God Services

'Some Aspects of Organising and Planning Services' – by Mr. Walter McEvilly, Chief Executive Officer of the Southern Health Board

'Estimating the Need' – by Dr. Michael Mulcahy, Medical Director, Stewart's Hospital

'Preparing the Handicapped for Employment' – by Dr. Joseph Robins of the Department of Health

are worthy of note. Of the numerous other papers presented during the week those dealing with the implementation of the rights of the mentally retarded person and on the new concepts in residential provisions were of particular interest. It is expected that the National Association for the Mentally Handicapped of Ireland will have available copies of the papers.

Contacts will, I hope, let its readers know more of this in due course.

HOME DECORATING AT ST. ITA'S



Six farm workers' cottages in the grounds of St. Ita's have been converted to accommodate former patients of the hospital. They work for farmers in the area but are unable to find accommodation locally. They pay a weekly charge to the hospital and this includes provision of food, cleaning etc.

One of the cottages has been modified to provide two large rooms, a dining area and communal sitting room. Each of the other cottages have a small communal area, bathroom, toilet, two double bedrooms and a single. At present, 15 former patients are accommodated but eventually it is intended to house 30.

BRIDGE HAND

by Kevin Quinn

E. W. Vul
S dealer

S 9832
H 784
D 109
C J1043

S KX	S A
H AKJXXX	H Q 10X
D AKXX	D J XXXXX
C K	C Q XX

S QJ10764
H 9
D Q
C A9876

S	W	N	E
Pass	2H	Pass	4H
4S	DBL	Pass	Pass
Pass			

West led the diamond ace, and continued with the king. South ruffed and led the spade queen. West, a high class player, suspecting that South was underleading the ace, put up the king, which was beaten by his partner's lone ace. East led the club queen, covered by south's ace, dropping partner's king.

So lucky South made his contract with a doubled overtrick. This hand shows the enormous value of shape. Counting three points for the sixth spade and three each for the two singletons, South's hand was valued at 18 points, justifying his sporting 'sacrifice'. East/West suffered the penalty of timid bidding. With his strong hand opposite a strong two-opening bid, East could have done better than four hearts. A heart slam was cold.

SPORTS DAY AT ST. BRENDAN'S

The annual sports for patients and staff of St. Brendan's Hospital were held on 15th August 1975.

The event was organised by the hospital Sports and Social Club, the president of which is Board Member, Mr. Martin Ruane. The Committee comprising John Brennan, P. J. O'Connor, Seamus Corby, Lucy McGuinness, Martin Farrell, Anna Duffy, Ted Lawton, M. Griffin, J. Mahony, T. Mahony, M. McDonald and William Walsh, worked hard to provide what turned out to be the biggest success to date.

The events were thoroughly enjoyed by a large crowd of spectators.

A sum of £110 was distributed among patients as prizes and refreshments such as fruit, sweets, cigarettes, biscuits and minerals. £90 of this was contributed by the hospital canteen fund, the remaining £20 being sent by various firms. The Social Club itself contributed £30 for staff prizes and £6 for prizes for staff children's events.

The day was rounded off by a very enjoyable social evening in the Recreation Hall, where they danced all night to the music of Brendan Woods.

The patients and staff of St. Brendan's are indebted to the enthusiastic Sports Committee who really made the day go. The Committee, in thanking those who helped, single out Mr. Frank Tisdall, who supplied the Sports equipment, Brendan Woods whose music made the social evening so enjoyable, the canteen fund organisers and the business firms who put up the money.

Retirements

Pat O'Riordan, A.S.O., from Medical Card Section has retired. He was in charge of that section from the introduction of the medical card system, or the much maligned 'Blue Card' as it was known. Times were more difficult then as the regulations made it harder to qualify for a card. Members of the public whose applications had been refused frequently descended on the office and invariably it was Pat who took over from his staff to accept the abuse and explain the position.

Things were sometimes rough, often hectic but through it all Pat's sense of humour ensured that it was a happy office to work in.

He is a very hard worker who never spared himself and Medical Card Section is not the same without him. Happy days, Pat.

Vincent Gogan, Porter from Registry, has also retired. Vincent has had a colourful career, as he was involved in the 1916 Rising, spent many years in America and was nearly killed in an accident there before returning to Ireland, where he regularly is nearly killed off his bike. An extremely popular and obliging man he is deeply interested in the welfare of the patients in St. James's.

He was presented with a cheque on behalf of the staff and he donated this to the St. Vincent de Paul Conference which visits the hospital.

We wish him every happiness in his retirement.

Mr. Ned Kenny, a popular member of the garden staff in the Central Mental Hospital, Dundrum retired on 30th September having reached the age limit.

Mr. Kenny was very highly regarded by patients and staff in Dundrum.

He was one of the 'old school' in gardening and an expert in all aspects of horticulture.

To mark the occasion of his retirement a presentation was made to him from the staff of the hospital.

Joe Allen was attached to Registry for many years but lately was based in Emmet House. During his long career he showed himself to be a perfectionist in everything he did. He was formerly a Wardsmaster in the South Dublin Union and has a fund of hair-raising stories of those days. He is also a first class clarinet player and we hope that he will continue playing for a long time.

Jim Doyle was attached to the Home Assistance Department. An extremely efficient man with a great sense of humour. He will be sorely missed by the corns and bunions clientele. We wish him every happiness in his retirement.

Tom Trainor, Inquiry Officer, has also retired. A very pleasant helpful man we hope he will enjoy a well earned rest.