

LOS ANGELES PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

Samuel J. Sperling, M. D.

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It is customary for the President now to render an annual report to the members. In a memo to the various chairmen, I suggested that you be spared boring repetitions of known facts, but that this meeting preferably be used for an appraisal of pertinent experiences and developments concerning ongoing or future activities, programs, plans, and policies. I shall likewise hold myself to that suggestion.

Those interested in the business matters of the Society have been kept well informed through the seven business meetings held during this term, as well as access to the available reports on file. Need for improved communications everlastingly persists, which need I hope will be increasingly met through the media of the meetings, direct reports, and the recent addition of the News Bulletin, initiated by the Committee on Public Information, and edited by Dr. Obler. As stated in my New Year's message, improved communication, which includes feedback, is essential to the health of any democratic organization and the News Bulletin provides an additional avenue for this.

A review of my term of office shows, besides the maintenance of the quality of its scientific and other programs, a number of new ventures that give cause for gratification, which I will briefly cite. Following a suggestion of Dr. Wexler, I carried through the affiliation of the Mexican Psychoanalytic Society with the West Coast Psychoanalytic Societies. In the latter organization I also initiated a change in the mode of policy decisions from that of the host Society alone to one which reflects the consensus of all its constituent societies. The initiation by the Society and Institute of a more formal Christmas Party with wives and guests that was held at the Reiss-Davis Clinic was a joyous occasion of good cheer and spirits, which set a highly desirable precedent. The unstructured seminar by the Post-Graduate Committee with outside leaders, such as Dr. Tarachow, likewise, set a worthwhile precedent that could be pursued more vigorously in the future. The recent sponsorship of an Auxiliary, under the guidance of Drs. Pastron and Casady, unearthed considerable, serious interest among the large number of potential members who attended the initial two meetings. This should make us cognizant of our neglect of this potential source of untapped woman power that could be harnessed to the social, community, and educational functions of the Society.

For these and other activities that I'll not enumerate, may I express my deep appreciation for the cooperative work of my fellow officers, of the committee members, and of our secretary. May I sincerely thank the many members who have contributed so generously of their time and energy towards the harmonious promotion of the Society's goals.

I shall now assume the prerogative of an outgoing President for a more personal Farewell Message to the Society. On this happy occasion, when I gladly lay aside the burdens of this office, I would be remiss in my duty were I not to render to the Society some fruits of that educational experience.

Looking backwards to the time of my assumption of the Presidency, I aspired to some lofty goals in the discharge of the duties and responsibilities entrusted to me. Its closing moments is then an appropriate time for self assessment in terms of relating accomplishments to aspirations.

When first elected, my hopes had led me to reactivate the Committee on the Study of Psychoanalytic Practice, and its findings were promised to you in my annual report last year and in my New Years' message. These hopes were based upon ascertaining the nature of the widespread dissatisfaction among our members with their practice of psychoanalysis. This unsatisfactory state of affairs was entirely too fundamental and serious to accept off-handedly the many expressions of highly individual and necessarily limited experience and opinions of any single member. Only a comprehensive study of a sufficiently representative sample of the membership could provide the pertinent data for an adequate solution. That its chairman, for reasons of ill health, was unable to get this committee functioning during my first year of office was a major disappointment. For on its findings and subsequent evaluation were based my high hopes that the Society would move towards a rectification of the causes of the prevailing dissatisfaction. I looked forward to a change from an unhealthy and unproductive atmosphere to a more friendly, cooperative, and constructive climate. I envisioned the presentation of more coordinated guidelines for specific actions in our organizations, and particularly by those committees concerned with our community relations - the Committees on Social Problems, Public Information, Mental Health, and Hospitals.

I believe such programs and more effective action by these committees, which I had expanded, are necessary if we are to improve the public image of the psychoanalyst and reverse a downward trend in our influence among the medical profession, the psychiatric residents, and the lay public.

Knowing that attempts to force through the best of programs provoke strong counter-resistances, one accepts delays which become more tolerable when used to lay sound foundations. Thus, despite its presentation so late in my term, I am gratified by the comprehensive and balanced study of the Committee. Their study has provided material and stimulus for the members to work together in dealing realistically with the prevailing unsatisfactory conditions.

The findings of the Committee permit no questioning of the need for a fundamental improvement of the spirit and atmosphere within our analytic community. Without this improved spirit no changes in By-laws and/or organizational structure can accomplish much. With an atmosphere of enlightened cooperation, mutual respect, constructive criticism, and encouraged creativity, even the poorest organizational structure may prove no serious handicap. The latter observation, however, need not negate the value of a well constituted, democratic organization for significantly enhancing the attainment of its goals. The Society is an organization that affords an open forum to all its members for an effective voice in its deliberations and decisions, as demonstrated by the several occasions when my own opinions or proposals were not accepted by the membership. For the Society, unlike the Institute, needs no constitutional changes in order to become a democratic vehicle for its membership.

It is a mere truism to state that democratic structure does not prevail in our Institute, cannot in the Educational Committee, but does in the Society. This condition may have led me at times to guard, perhaps overzealously, any infringement on that democratic structure. For I firmly believe that with the preservation of the Society's essential democratic structure dissensions and difficulties can eventually be resolved justly, honorably, and realistically. The opportunity to freely study, present and discuss openly different points of view was well exemplified by the Committee's report and its subsequent discussion.

By no means do I wish to convey the impression that because problems can be approached with respectful consideration of differences of opinion that all will become sweetness and light. To do so would ignore the dire warning that Dr. Vatz uttered in his report last week at the annual meeting of the Institute. Never has he felt the organization so threatened and the atmosphere so destructive since 1948. Certainly a pollyanna optimism would indeed be unwarranted from the findings of the Committee. Rather are the problems too serious and the facts too disturbing to warrant such attitudes.

Likewise must we look hard and critically at some of the suggested solutions and plausible explanations. The latter fall into two contrasting categories. One group tends to dismiss those complaints of members concerning training and training analysts because they are not unique to our Institute, but occur

in other localities; or that they are mere historical repetitions of rebellion either against authorities or of the young against the old. This is not the appropriate time for entering into any detailed discussion of such plausible discountings. They are countered by pointing to the fact that the widespread and frequent occurrence of the complaints could on the contrary be indicative of their substantial basis. Rebellions do not occur where authority is exercised considerately and democratically. More basic is the recognition that historic changes have been occurring not merely in the general sociological sphere but particularly in psychoanalytic organizations. Historic anachronisms of influence and power in these organizations fail to reflect the considerable shift in the number and development of analysts involved in the Society and its expanding functions relative to that of the Educational Committee.

The other category of plausible explanation asserts that the dissatisfactions are solely reflections of personality disturbances, of personal animosities and rivalries. These may be discussed more specifically at different degrees of theoretical sophistication and heat. Simply stated is the charge that the child has not matured sufficiently to resolve his hostile dependency on the parent or his sibling rivalry conflict. At other levels unresolved negative transferences or even psychopathological diagnoses or other stereotype labels are pinned on the alleged dissidents. Such across the table psychologizings or "psychoanalyse" have always been condemned by mature analysts no matter how convenient, self-comforting or plausible they may sound. For this name calling exercise is one that provokes two to play. To wit I have heard some training analysts accused of behaving like autocratic parents whose ire is aroused when their opinions or edicts are questioned. Or such promulgators feel betrayed when their disciples no longer voice agreement. When the growing independence of the child entails his persistent rebellion or prolonged animosity, we suspect the contributory influence of such parents. Sometimes unanalyzed countertransferences are blamed for inadequate didactic analyses. May I emphasize that such changes are by no means voiced against the majority of training analysts, but only against a few.

As to sibling rivalry charges, one hears overtones of bickering parents; sometimes from the privacy of the educational chamber, sometimes in the uncomfortable setting of children feeling caught and used in a power struggle between such quarrelsome parents. Sometimes strikingly impressive is the healthy good sense such maturing children exercise in their prime constructive efforts to preserve the unity of and harmony within the family. The demonstrable evidence of maturity, independent judgment, and constructive attitudes of our members in their discussions of the committee's study should foster pride in the Educational Committee as a whole and serve to allay fears for the future welfare of psychoanalysis among us.

Intricately interwoven in these polemics lies the inability of members of the Educational Committee to resolve certain differences in their midst, which has lead implicitly, or, explicitly stated in fact, to efforts or the need to entangle the Society into these conflicts. Contrariwise, I have yet to hear any Society member voice any desire to infringe upon the essential autonomy of the Educational Committee in the performance of its training function. Nevertheless, apparent to many, both within and outside the Educational Committee, has com the desirability or necessity of greater participation by the members in its parameter activities, i.e., those outside necessary confidential matters.

For implicit in the entagling alliances of the members by training analysts lies the recognition of the increasing influence and role that the general membership, both on the local and national level, must play in the future course of psychoanalysis. For with the coming of age of a new generation of analysts, trained under more stringent and thorough requirements than in its early formative period, it is no longer necessary to maintain an inner Ring, a sanctum sanctorum, to protect the purity and fundamental tenets of psychoanalysis. For there are no basic differences of scientific principles at stake in present-day dissatisfactions.

Unresolved transferences of graduates in the form of unrealistic overidealization of the training analyst must lead to disappointment. The basic question remains, however: is it unrealistic for the Society members to expect the training analyst to conduct himself in public and in his relationship to his patients and to his colleagues with that dignity and integrity which merits respect, yes, even pride in their recognition? Such respect, however, as of a parent, cannot be the mere privileged demand or expectation of their sanctimonious status.

I did not relate the tit for tat polemics to prove any particular explanation but primarily to illustrate how fruitless they are. I would rather strongly warn the Society against attempts to resolve the problems by resort to these two categories of plausible explanations----that of the personal diagnostic label or that of the use of the broad historical or sociological analogies, no matter how seemingly valid in particular cases. These offer little in the way of realistic solutions, which will be found only within the framework of the major existing organizations of our psychoanalytic community--that of Society, of Institute and of the Educational Committee.

The problem of the relationship between these three entities is now under serious study by the combined Committee of Society and Institute. The Committee appears well aware of the historical changes that have been occurring in analytic circles, both here and elsewhere, which call for well considered adaptive measures.

The enlightened consideration of the various problems and the easy, free exchange of viewpoints expressed in the two meetings thus far held by the Committee members indeed augurs well for their capacity to bring forth a constructive solution to our mutual relationships.

In emphasizing a fundamental organizational approach to the solution of our problems, I do not mean to foreclose avenues for the expression of grievances against individuals. The Society does have a grievance committee, which can be used by anyone who believes that any member's behavior is detrimental to analysis and to the Society.

In closing my assessment may I add that though I endured some disappointment in that the constructive solution of underlying problems, subsequently highlighted by the Committee's report, was not attained, I take considerable satisfaction that a long latent current of dissatisfaction has been clearly brought to the surface. Just as we know there can be no real resolution of conflicts that remain unconscious, so could there be no possibility of constructive solution to these problems of the Society that remain suppressed to fester an atmosphere stifling to constructive participation and creativity, until they were brought out into the light of free and open discussion in the Society's meetings and its Committees. This fact and an increasing appreciation of a general agreement of the goals, even of dissidents, particularly as regards the necessity for changes in the power and organizational structure of the Institute and Education Committee have enhanced my optimism for our future.

I end my term on a more hopeful note for the improvement of the analytic atmosphere and the development of a spirit of greater trust, friendship, respect, and creative fruitfulness for our common endeavors in advancing the science and the art of Psychoanalysis.