CHALLENGE! –

By PHEIDIPPIDES

To the Editor, British Journal of Sports Medicine

Dear Sir,

The extraordinary events of the Annual General Meeting of April, 1980 prompt me, sadly and cynically, to enquire of the membership of our Association whether they have any corporate intention of rising above petty squabbles and inactivity to meet the real needs of our sportsmen in 1980? At a meeting remarkable for its personal animosities and betrayal of gentlemanly understanding, no attention was paid to the practical provision of medical or scientific services to the sportsman.

The world does not owe B.A.S.M. or its members a living. Indeed, the proliferation of so many separate organisations and services to the sportsman appears to raise the more serious question of the necessity of any future for B.A.S.M. The Association has grown remarkably in recent years to over 1200 members but the Committee is little changed and the officers virtually identical throughout the '70's. This is not to deny credit and gratitude for services nobly rendered by our servants. But the sheer absence of successors should surely alarm any Association with ambitions.

Perhaps, in an age where even doctors are not prepared to look after their hospital patients without detailed over-time pay, it is not surprising that these same young men and women will not come forward to bear honorary office at considerable personal cost in time, energy and finance, in the way in which their predecessors did. Scientists seem no more willing to bear office and responsibility than clinicians. If an organisation of our size is incapable of turning over its officers and Committee, and probably policy too, in a more dynamic way, perhaps it should seek to contract itself into a social club of manageable proportions. There must be an optimum number at which people volunteer their services but, beyond which they politely decline.

What of B.A.S.M.'s activities? There are hardly any meetings. The annual course seems popular and makes a profit but is by definition confined to two or three score new students each year. What do we do for the old students?

What liaison is there with the medical and physiotherapy schools in Britain?

There is a constant undercurrent of hostility from some clinical factions who seem to wish for a stratification of our membership into first-class clinicians and second-class others. This, well and truly aired in "Challenge" over the last couple of years, seems to have got a raspberry from the membership, so we apparently want to remain a mixed discipline democracy.

Unfortunately, there is an implied and actual hostility, somewhat by default admittedly, from non-clinicians in our membership. Some physiotherapists show a muted ambivalence towards B.A.S.M. with a split loyalty to A.C.P.S.M. Some scientists with equal ambivalence, have formed a separate group while keeping B.A.S.M. membership and the academic heavyweights in science have remained firmly within B.A.S.M. throughout. We hardly see psychologists.

Do we have a corporate aim? It seems all very well to talk of constitutional readjustments, but it doesn't seem clear to me what the membership really wants from B.A.S.M. or, much more to the point, is prepared to give through B.A.S.M.

The picture the outsider has is a clear one of a fairly fixed central core of a few members who form the Executive, fiddling agitatedly while the future of sports medicine burns. Where does B.A.S.M. belong in the academic hierarchy? Where is B.A.S.M. in relation to the governing bodies? What services does B.A.S.M. organise for sportsmen themselves, either through prompt treatment of injuries or arrangement of scientific services? Is it true that B.A.S.M., like that worthy rival, The Institute of Sports Medicine, is in fact equally guilty of the latter's historic description of "doing nothing, but doing it impeccably"?

Above all, if the American College of Sports Medicine can regularly turn out over 30 per cent of its membership at its four-day Annual Meeting and is highly organised into both professional and regional sub-sections, what on earth is B.A.S.M. trying to do with an active membership of less than 100 out of 1200, with no regional organisation, no professional sub-groupings and, by the look of it, and the Loughborough Annual Meeting appearances of it, pretty little central organisation either.

OBITUARY

Mr. W. A. C. Shillibeer, MCSP

It is with great regret that the death of William (Bill) A. C. Shillibeer has to be recorded. He died on 12th May, 1980 as the result of a road traffic accident. Bill Shillibeer joined the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy in 1971, having been admitted to the Physiotherapists Association in 1950. He joined B.A.S.M. in 1964. His personal principle sport was cycling but his deep interest involved him in a wide variety of disciplines. He was, for many years, Honorary Physiotherapist to the British Olympic Association and the Commonwealth Games and regularly attended the Maccabi Games. He was in the forefront of post-war sports physiotherapy.

D. P. Chapman