

News from Keston College

The Annual General Meeting in October 1981 was as usual a very successful occasion but marked by one unusual absence: that of Rev. Michael Bourdeaux, still on sabbatical leave in the USA. He returned to Keston just after Christmas very stimulated by the experience of teaching at Fuller Theological Seminary and Wellesley College, and more convinced than ever of the urgent need for systematic development of the international work of Keston College. At the beginning of February we put into effect a new arrangement towards which Michael Bourdeaux had been working for many months: he has become International Director of Keston College, with responsibility for organizing and co-ordinating the development of Keston's work throughout the world, while Dr Philip Walters has become Executive Director, responsible for the day-to-day running of the College and its research programme.

The last six months have seen a real breakthrough in achieving more general recognition of the importance of the work of Keston College. The recent sad events in Poland have revealed Keston as one of the few reliable sources of information in the West not only on Poland but on the religious situation in Eastern Europe in general. At the beginning of January after we released a story on Lech Walesa we were besieged by worldwide enquiries from news agencies, newspapers, radio and television. One staff member, Alexander Tomsky, appeared eight times on television and 25 times on the radio in the space of a fortnight.

At the same time as responding to increasing demands from the media, we nevertheless always bear in mind the necessity of planning ahead and organizing our research programme in a systematic way. We are in the process of producing several major books, and have also begun planning a series of smaller pamphlets, the first of which, *Catholic Poland*, is to be published to coincide with the forthcoming visit to Britain of His Holiness the Pope. We are also working towards a major academic event which will establish Keston as a teaching college: a semester for students from the USA and other countries from February to May 1983 at which full courses on religion in Eastern Europe will be given by Keston staff and invited lecturers.

In planning our priorities, we are glad to say that we have been able to restore *RCL* to the number of pages it had before the cuts of 1981. This year we shall be publishing three issues, each at the larger size of 120 pages. We would like to thank all our subscribers for putting up with so much over the past year and for their continuing financial support.

There have been a number of staff changes recently. Miss Josephine Winch has retired as our Subscriptions Secretary. I would like to thank her for devoted service to Keston and for her personal contribution to the life of the College. We welcome Mr Stanley Curtis as our Cashier and Mr

James Pierce as our Membership and Subscriptions Officer. Mrs Joan Taylor has now been appointed Education Officer, with responsibility *inter alia* for building up our educational resource material and for the co-ordination of speaking arrangements. We also welcome back Mrs Shirley Harrison as Secretary to Michael Bourdeaux, Mrs Lorna Bourdeaux as Assistant to the Research Department, and Mrs Marion Broucher who is giving valuable part-time secretarial assistance.

An important event in the history of Keston took place in February: a reception at Lambeth Palace at the invitation of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury. Both the Archbishop and Mr Harold Macmillan, the guest speaker, were warm in their commendation of the work of Keston, and Michael Bourdeaux appealed for financial support. As consolidation of Keston's growing reputation, the occasion was a great success, bringing together distinguished and prominent people from a wide variety of professions and callings and giving them the opportunity to learn about our work. It is sad, however, that so far very little financial backing for Keston has resulted from the evening.

All plans for a new building at Keston have had to be shelved for the time being. A substantial portion of the money which has been set aside for starting the building has had to be used to treat an extensive outbreak of dry rot. We are glad that one project at least is moving towards a successful conclusion: the rebuilding and refitting of the archive and library in the main hall of the old school. The archive is now in a newly-appointed warm sunny office and the library is soon to be transformed into a large congenial room which can also be used for lectures, meetings and services. We urgently need more rooms, however, because without them we shall never be able to increase our staff: all available rooms are now fully occupied. We must relaunch an appeal for this specific purpose.

It is a tragedy that at a time when the value of the work of Keston should be gaining increasing recognition from all quarters we should still be unable, for financial reasons, to expand our premises or our research staff. Thanks to the careful husbandry of the College Secretary, Donald Sly, our financial situation is now much healthier than it was eighteen months ago, but we are still by no means on safe ground. We badly need £200,000 of extra guaranteed regular income a year to begin to be able to plan a proper research programme tailored exactly to the needs of believers in Eastern Europe and to respond as we would like to all the increasing demands being made upon us.

DR PHILIP WALTERS
Executive Director

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