

Sedgley Park College of Education, Manchester

Semper Fidelis

"May God fill those who here teach and learn, with knowledge, wisdom and reverence". This prayer used at the blessing of the college extension which was completed in 1963 when Sedgley celebrated its diamond jubilee could not express more aptly what had been the purpose and wish of the founders some sixty years before. The year 1963 offers a suitable point from which, first to look back at lowly beginnings and then forward to the more complex and challenging situation in which the college finds itself to-day.

The idea of training young women to teach in Catholic schools was one that was dear to the Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus and to Canon Richardson of the Salford diocese towards the turn of the century. It materialised, not without a chain of disappointment, frustration and delay, not at all unusual at the initial stages of worthwhile enterprises in the year 1903 when the first three students representing England, Scotland and Ireland, settled down to their course of training at Adelphi House School. It was imperative that the new establishment should seek a home of its own and so in 1905 the Jacobean mansion of Sedgley House was purchased to accommodate the steadily increasing number of students. A perusal of the college chronicle during the early years brings to life the earnestness, industry and extraordinary lightheartedness of the students who, although spartan-like compared to our modern way of living, obviously enjoyed and benefited from the security of a close-knit, strictly disciplined community. The setting of the college, "an agreeable region of seven to eight acres of well-timbered land was quite rural, with the front windows facing a green valley grazing milch cows". To-day in 1973 a first year science student investigates in Sedgley Park village, the subject of air pollution, and designs with the help of her tutor a meter to measure the sulphur-dioxide in the atmosphere! The contrast, whether in surroundings, teaching methods or student habits between the first and seventh decades of the century may be sharp. However the evolution of the work and life of the college is on the whole fairly smooth with each generation of staff and students alert to the signs of the times and gradually adapting to its needs.

By the time the college celebrated its sixty years some 5,000 students had been trained at Sedgley. In 1960 the teacher-supply situation, coupled with the decision to lengthen the initial training course from two to three years had led the Government to authorise a major

expansion of the colleges. It was this policy that accounted for the numbers at Sedgley rising rapidly in the mid-sixties from 250 to over 500 students. Its present student population is 600. In this same period an intensive building programme provided the additional teaching accommodation that was needed. Fairly recent recommendations have resulted in the establishment of a four-year course of study leading to the award of the Bachelor of Education degree. The number of Sedgley students availing themselves of the degree course is rapidly increasing.

After the dramatic expansion of the 1960's Sedgley is coming to grips with quite a new challenge which will undoubtedly be characteristic of this decade. Following the Government policy to reduce quite drastically the number of teachers in training, comes the need for the college to contribute in the widest possible way to the provision of higher education for an increasing number of school leavers. How the college will be reorganised in view of current needs is now the subject of serious consideration within the college. Sedgley sees itself maintaining its commitment to the education and training of teachers, and at the same time making a substantial contribution to other forms of higher education. With the demand for in-service courses becoming greater, the college effort in this direction will be a generous one. Nor will the specific needs of the Catholic schools be neglected. Fortunate in having the Diocesan Religious Education Centre on the college campus, the college staff welcomes the opportunity of collaboration with the staff of the Centre in providing the variety of courses best suited to the needs of serving teachers. While the activity and scope of Sedgley increases, its prayer and wish remains unchanged. "May God fill those who here teach and learn, with knowledge, wisdom and reverence".

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