

Actuarial Examinations

The Editor,
*The Journal of the Institute of
Actuaries Students' Society*

31 March 1947

Dear Sir,

In his letter to you of 5 November 1946, Joseph very rightly points out that students sitting for the examinations possess widely different qualities, but his suggestion that they may be divided into two groups, viz. those worthy to become Fellows and those not so worthy seems to reflect an attitude of mind more reminiscent of pre-war Whitehall than Birmingham. Not that I think, for one moment, that Joseph is suggesting a division of candidates according to the colour of their blood or their tie; it would, however, have been of considerable help, if he had been more explicit on this point of the criteria of worthiness, which is a *sine qua non*, if his questions are to be answered.

I was under the impression that the Preliminary Examination was intended to effect strong initial selection in separating the 'worthies' from the rest but presumably the mesh is too large and many unworthies slip through the first net, only to be caught in subsequent and finer nets. For those few unworthies who attain the guerdon, surely Joseph would not begrudge them the unqualified F.I.A. Is it not something of a reflexion on the examiners that with so many nets, of such fine mesh, they allow so many apparent unworthies to proceed so far?

I cannot agree with Joseph's contention that the results shown in the paper submitted by Vajda and myself have little relation to the Institute Examinations. They at least show the need for (a) a clear definition of the qualities, natural or acquired, expected of the 'Worthy' Fellow, and (b) an earlier and less painful elimination of the 'unworthy' aspirants.

By way of illustration, consider the fifty-seven students who passed Part I in 1928. Fourteen years later, only fourteen of them had gained the Fellowship. Even if all these fourteen were 'worthies', it appears that either the initial selection at Part I

was not effective enough or something is radically wrong with the examination system. Of the fourteen Fellows, one took 3 years to qualify after passing Part I, one took 6 years, two took 7 years, three took 8 years, three took 9 years, two took 12 years and two took 14 years. Does this mean, that, *after passing Part I*, 75% of the candidates are unworthy of becoming Fellows and the remaining 25% will take, on the average, 9 years to qualify? It is a sobering thought, and if more widely known to intending students, might act as a stronger selective force than even Part I itself.

Yours faithfully,

W. L. MAYHEW

Vacoas
Mauritius