Symposium 33. Amsterdam, Oxford, New York: Associated Scientific Publishers.

LEIDERMAN, P. H. & SEASHORE, M. J. (1975) Mother-infant neonatal separation: some delayed consequences. In *Parent-Infant Interaction*. Ciba Foundation Symposium 33. Amsterdam, Oxford, New York: Associated Scientific Publishers.

LYNCH, M., STEINBERG, D. & OUNSTED, D. (1975). Family unit in a children's psychiatric hospital. *British Medical Journal*, ii, 127–9.

MAIN, T. F. (1958) Mothers with children in a psychiatric hospital. *Lancet*, ii, 845–7.

SPENCE, J. C. (1947) The care of children in hospital. *British Medical Journal*, i, 125–30.

TEACHING THE TEACHERS—AN ENCOUNTER

By JOHN SUMNER STEAD

Chairman, Psychiatric Sub-Committee, South West Thames Regional Postgraduate Committee

The psychiatric tutors in the South West Thames Region recently got it into their heads that as no one had ever taught them anything about how to teach it was high time they explored the possibilities. This idea, backed by Professor Dick, the Postgraduate Dean, roughly coincided with the appointment of John Heron as Assistant Director of Medical Education to the Postgraduate Federation. He has been known for years, while working at Surrey University, as an advanced educationalist alarmingly inclined to the use of encounter group methods. Undaunted, the tutors sent out a reconnaissance party, then digested a provisional programme in the form of a contract which talked of facilitative and cognitive learning, the need to study the relationship between teacher and taught, to forego the idea that teachers are born and not made, to accept that techniques of teaching do not take you far unless the relationships are right, and hence the need for group experience and some personal disclosure.

Nine of us met at the Adult Education Centre at Fittleworth, which provides homely surroundings and home-made food. We all knew each other, but we did not know what we were in for, so the first day was spent looking at what tutors actually do and mapping out a programme for the week. Tensions began to express themselves, and two dropped out. That evening we had a gentle introduction to encounter group techniques which resulted in a sudden reduction of tension and the involvement of all in serious discussion. Thereafter for four days we worked hard from 9.30 am to 10.00 pm on an extraordinary mixture of experiential learning, intervention analysis, role playing and role testing and increasingly intense group activity,

with even twenty minutes of didactic teaching thrown in for good measure. It was remarkable to see how, under skilled management, a group of well-defended middle-aged professionals like ourselves could within three days be exposing and helping to resolve some very disturbing personal hang-ups. None of us was untouched by the experience, and I came away knowing that for the first time I did know just a little about the teaching/learning process, but also with that hard-to-describe sense of freedom and elation which comes when some internal knots have been untied. We meet again, three times, for half-day sessions of evaluation and review in the coming weeks.

So the experiment was a success, and we can confidently recommend that senior registrars and tutors in other specialties could benefit from the same experience. In John Heron the Postgraduate Federation has made an appointment which could have a significant and growing influence on medical education.

Thinking more broadly: the subject matter of undergraduate medical education undergoes a slow process of evolution and development. Most would say much too slow. Postgraduate education and vocational training are expanding fields, but have we yet begun to think about medical education as a whole—starting on entry to a medical school and ending on retirement? And how much attention is being paid to the educational process and its techniques? And how much to the teaching of teachers? How many, in fact, of the hundreds of medical teachers in this country have had more training than this small group of tutors in this brief but successful experiment?

14