

Editorial:

A CHALLENGE TO MEMBERS

THE emphasis that is being put on the importance of training scientists today presupposes a good educational foundation. This can hardly be obtained without a sufficient groundwork in reading. That there are in both our public and private schools an appreciable number of children with severe reading disabilities is not news to members of THE ORTON SOCIETY. What are we doing about it?

Dr. Alanson Hinman in his talk on "A Pediatrician Looks at Language Disabilities" at the 1957 fall meeting of THE ORTON SOCIETY in New York, made a strong plea for more aggressive action on the part of the specialists in this field to "sell" their work to the public. "This is the era of the big sell", Dr. Hinman said. "If you have a product and you want to market it, it is no longer feasible to put it prettily in a window and wait for someone to come and buy it. That was once the best method but now if you have a product, you must create a market for it and then it will sell itself.

"I have a strong feeling", Dr. Hinman continued, "that, on the whole, language therapy has been put in a window. It has been shown, and adequately so, to the public. . . . Yet, because of the obvious shortage of personnel and the fear that advertising too widely will bring only a larger and more impossible waiting list, no effort has yet been made to get out and create a market for the product. In this case it is really a service for which a market already exists, but the public doesn't know about it and so the support and encouragement so vitally needed have not been forthcoming. I don't think you should start a national foundation with paid, professional fund-raisers and the support of some screen or television star. That is not the only or the best way to do this.

"I do feel that each one of you can give a bit of yourselves and your own extra time, however, to say something strong, something positive, and something persuasive to the people in your immediate environment."

Dr. Hinman's message could not have been more timely. Many of us who are working together in THE ORTON SOCIETY have been thinking along these same lines, particularly as we read the numerous current articles in our daily newspapers and magazines stressing the need for better scientific education to put our national defense on a safer basis.

"SCIENCE? THEY CAN'T EVEN READ!" This was the arresting headline of a recent feature article by one of the staff writers in the Sunday WASHINGTON POST. He called attention to the fact that many children in the elementary and secondary schools in the Nation's Capital are failing to respond to classroom reading procedures and therefore are unable to attain success in the educational field which would open up to them unlimited scope for their otherwise excellent abilities.

No one knows better than the members of THE ORTON SOCIETY the great number of potential scientists, mathematicians and engineers who are today blocked in their educational progress by unrecognized and untreated reading disabilities. Who can even estimate the loss to our country of vitally needed specialists who may be failing to learn to read adequately because of a specific reading disability? And yet we hear almost daily from some teacher or parent, or even the head of an educational institution, "I never heard of such a thing." What can we, as members of THE ORTON SOCIETY do about this woeful ignorance and the appalling lack of resources throughout the country for the recognition and training of the children—perhaps ten percent of the total school population—who are handicapped by some measure of specific language disability?

We can, and should, first of all continue to demonstrate the value and the practicality of our approach, understanding, and methods, based as they are on neurological premises, by maintaining high standards and quality in our individual undertakings. Our frontiers are steadily being

extended, as will be apparent from the reports of members' work from coast to coast in this BULLETIN. We should not be panicked, however, into attempts at mass production in either our remedial programs or the training of teachers, for the essence of our work is the development of the capacities of the **individual** pupil. This will always require individual diagnostic studies and appropriate, differentiated teaching.

We can, nevertheless, and we undoubtedly should, as Dr. Hinman has pointed out, exert ourselves to much greater effort to "sell" our product to the community. We can persistently and continually inform doctors, parents, teachers, school administrators, and others about the existence of special language difficulties in bright children and the methods by which they can be

helped. We must find and use many more media for this than we have in the past. Although old to us, we must remember that our work is **new** and therefore News to each new generation of parents, teachers, and medical students. They will be interested in hearing about it at parent-teacher meetings and in educational study groups, and reading about it in their local and state medical and educational journals as well as at national meetings and in national publications. What if every member of THE ORTON SOCIETY wrote ten articles or gave ten talks during the coming year? This might easily spread the word to 100,000 people who had never heard of special language disabilities before. Is it not up to each of us to try to find time for this extra effort right now?

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In Memoriam

PETER GOW

Founder and Head Master
The Gow School, South Wales, N. Y.

May 14, 1958

We learn with sadness of the death of PETER GOW, a pioneer in the education of boys with reading disabilities, and a charter member of THE ORTON SOCIETY.

After graduating from Yale, Mr. Gow had a wide and successful teaching experience with boys in such schools as Choate and Nichols and Park School in Buffalo, and for a time, he once told us, he found satisfaction in the fine performance of his Latin classes. But then his interest was challenged by the scholastic problems of the "other" boys, the students who seemed just as earnest and alert but who were repeated academic failures. For them, he founded THE GOW SCHOOL in 1926. A short time later he came to know Dr. Orton and as he learned more and more from him as to the nature of many educational blocks, he made "reconstructive language" the core of the school's

curriculum — the basic course — and he insisted that reading and other phases of language development be stressed as an integral part of every course.

Mr. Gow and Dr. Orton had continued contacts throughout the years, enjoying and profiting from their discussions, which might include the needs of individual pupils or the origin of a word or the construction of a laboratory. They had many similar qualities: untiring enthusiasm for their work, insatiable intellectual curiosity, a deep understanding of boys, and a shining integrity.

The officers and members of THE ORTON SOCIETY wish to extend their sincere sympathy to Mr. Gow's family at this time, with the hope that THE GOW SCHOOL will continue to be an outstanding educational memorial to the ideals and work of its founder, PETER GOW.