

THE JOURNAL

This extract from the *BDJ*, published on 20 January 1950 in Volume 88, discusses the *BDJ*'s amalgamation with the Incorporated Dental Society (IDS) and the Public Dental Services Association (PDSA).*

The previous number of this, the 88th volume of the Journal, was the first one to be circulated to the whole of the membership of the reconstituted British Dental Association. At one bound the circulation was increased from just over 10,000 to nearly 14,000 copies. It had at one time been feared that the combined allocation of paper of the Journal, the *Mouth Mirror* and the *Dental Gazette* would barely suffice to provide a journal of the pre-amalgamation size for the whole of the increased membership. The abolition of paper rationing of periodicals has now, however, not only removed any doubts on that score, but has made it possible to combine an increase in the number of pages in the Journal with a relaxation of the austerity standards imposed by wartime conditions. One result of this relaxation is that it is now permissible to use a better grade of paper. As a consequence this issue of the Journal marks a partial return to pre-war practice – and an end to the hybrid appearance of some recent issues in which two different grades of paper were used in the same issue – a compromise dictated by the desire to do full justice to the illustrations of important articles without unduly restricting the space available for other matter. This change, in addition to improving the appearance of the Journal, will also make for easier reading, as both print and illustrations will stand out more clearly than they did on the thin wartime paper on which the greater part of the Journal had perforce to be printed in recent years. Coupled with this it is hoped, as and when sufficient supplies of paper of the required grade become available, to extend the gradual improvement in type sizes, which was instituted last year. Unfortunately the ending of rationing does not mean that the supply position has yet been fully restored to the pre-war standard, and it may well be some years before those responsible for British periodicals will cease to have cause to envy their American and Scandinavian colleagues their apparently unlimited supplies of high grade paper. In the meantime, it is a fortunate coincidence that the increase in the circulation of the Journal should have come at the same time as improvements in the make-up became possible. It is to be hoped that the improvements now being made, welcome as they are, will prove to be but precursors of further improvements in the not too distant future.

Just as a free and independent Press is essential in any democratic community, so a journal is an indispensable adjunct to an organisation such as the British Dental Association. Moreover, every increase in the size of the membership enhances the importance of the part the Journal plays in relation to the work, both scientific and political, of the Association. The steady growth of the overseas circulation – a growth hardly checked by the war – is a gratifying sign of the important place the Journal has come to occupy in the dental literature of the world. No less significant in this connection are the numerous scientific



◀ articles submitted for publication in the Journal by overseas authors and the numbers of requests, received from abroad, for reprints of articles which have appeared in its pages. Some of these articles necessarily have a direct appeal to a minority only of the readers of the Journal but they, nevertheless, afford all of them a ready means of keeping in touch with the latest developments of the dental and allied sciences, and to many they are an almost indispensable adjunct to postgraduate study. It is, however, in respect to what they may for convenience be described as the political aspect of the work of the Association that the increase in the membership carries with it a corresponding increase in the usefulness of the Journal in the activities of the Association. The printed word can never take the place of free and open discussion but, with every increase in the size of an organisation it becomes more and more an essential means of intercommunication between the governing bodies at the centre and the individual members at the periphery. It also provides a medium through which the latter can express their opinions to a wider audience than that provided by their own branches and sections. It is, however, a mistake to suppose that articles, reports of letters in the Journal provide a substitute for personal interchange of thought and free speech. At best they can provide no more than a summing up. This is a useful and, indeed, essential function but its value will depend in a very large measure on the extent to which it is an accurate representation of the considered opinion of the members as a whole.

In this province the business of the Journal is to supply all the relevant facts to members of the Association, to keep them in the closest possible touch with the proceedings of the Representative Board and of the branches of the Association and to provide them with opportunities for the expression of their individual opinions. The second of these tasks can be satisfactorily accomplished only with the cooperation of the officials of each of the branches. In the past, reports of branch meetings formed a regular part of the contents of the Journal but a glance through the pages of the Supplement for the past year will reveal with the proceedings of only a minority of the branches were regularly reported. This is to be regretted since reports of such meetings are not only of interest to members in other branches but they also serve to stimulate interest in the branch itself – a consideration to which the increase in the membership lends weight. The work of honorary secretaries of branches has grown considerably in recent years and it is perhaps expecting too much of them to suggest that they should supply reports of all their meetings to the Journal. Where this is the case the practice, which has already been adopted by some branches, of appointing an editor seems to be worthy of consideration. The increase in the number of pages in the Journal must of necessity be on a modest scale and there are many claims on the available space. In view, however, of the importance of the work of the branches none is more pressing than that for adequate publicity for their proceedings.

**For further details, we would recommend Stanley Gelbier's article: 125 years of developments in dentistry, 1880–2005 Part 2: Law and the dental profession. Br Dent J 2005; 199: 470–473.*

