

QUEENS' HOUSE ROTHERHITHE

A special meeting of the college to discuss the future of Queens' House, Rotherhithe has been called for 7 p.m. on Wednesday, March 1st 1939. The committee earnestly requests you to be present, and is forwarding herewith a statement of the circumstances in which the meeting has been found necessary.

A.D. BROWNE

C.T. WOOD

E.A. MAXWELL

H. St. J. HART

P.J. JAY

J.B.C. ROBINSON

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N.E. MITCHELL

P.H.L. LING

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I. MACDONALD

Queens' College, Cambridge.

February 1939.

THE FUTURE OF QUEENS' HOUSE, ROTHERHITHE

A meeting of the college has been called to consider the future of Queens' House, Rotherhithe.

Mr. Bache after eight years service at Rotherhithe has accepted the living of Oakington near Cambridge. He leaves the work at Queens' House in a condition probably better than it has ever been before, and we are of the opinion that it is of inestimable value in the lives of many boys and young men in the Rotherhithe district.

While the conditions in the club itself are thus very satisfactory there are difficulties which must be faced if the work is to continue.

Your committee has met for several special meetings this term to consider the future. Mr Bache was part time curate of the church of the parish in which the club is situated. The parish was responsible for part of his stipend, and the college paid part and provided him with rooms in Queens' House. Owing to difficulties in the Parish your committee consider that the present arrangement is one which cannot be continued.

While the financial support from the college has on the whole been good (especially considering the many calls recently made on men in the University in connection with Spanish children, Jewish refugee, and other funds) it has nevertheless fallen. The fall in subscriptions has not been made up by the increase in the number of men in the college.

At present it is clear that we cannot afford to continue the work at Queens' House on the scale on which it has been run in the past, still less pay an adequate stipend to a whole time missionary who received nothing from the parish.

The present lease of Queens' House has two years to run, so that we have a financial liability.

The committee have made a temporary arrangement for the carrying on of the work of the club until the end of the August camp which is the last activity of the season. We have placed an old member of the club, Mr Fricker, in charge under the supervision of a local committee consisting of Mr Pater, an old Queens' man and civil servant, Miss Haslam, a local social worker who for many years has been of great service to Mr Bache (and indeed to previous missionaries) and Mr Winters, who is in charge of the funds. Mr Fricker will live in Queens' House and be paid a small stipend. We believe that these measures will work well for the time being, but would not wish to make them permanent.

As to the future. It has to be admitted that the weakness lies at this end: the club at Rotherhithe is very prosperous and doing extraordinarily good work. But the interest in the club among members of the college is confined to a very small minority. The committee has therefore had to consider the suggestion that Queens' House should be closed, and feel that unless there is an increased interest in the work of the club among members of the college this drastic step will have to be taken. The mere increase in subscriptions, necessary as it is, would not in our opinion be an adequate security for the future.

Of the importance and value of the work that has been going on at Queens' House for the last twenty seven years many members of the college past and present have no doubt. But these are in nearly all cases the persons who have had personal contact with that work. It is also clear to all those of us who know the club at the present level of efficiency to which Mr Bache has brought it that the closing of it now would be a very severe loss in the lives of some ninety or a hundred boys and young men in the district. The committee would therefore view the closing of the club with the very deepest regret. But unless there is a latent interest in the college that can be aroused the possibility must be faced.

From various inquiries which have already been made by members of the committee in the college it seems possible to hope that such an interest may be found to exist. We have therefore called a meeting of the college at which the situation can be discussed.

If the committee is reassured at that meeting that at least a considerable part of the college wish to continue the work of Queens' house they would propose to try to find a suitable man to take charge in September, who would be willing to give his spare time to the club and to live in Queens' House, or possibly at the Cambridge house settlement, and to pay him a part time stipend.

The committee recognise that such a man could not carry on the work on the scale which Mr Bache has managed if only for the reason that he would not have as much time to devote to it. This we must recognise means a serious loss to the boys in such matters as the finding of suitable work for which they have in the past been greatly assisted by Mr Bache. It would also involve less co-operation with other local social services. But Queens' House would go on, and still perform a much needed service. In the future if prospects improved the committee would urge the appointment once more of a whole time missionary.

The committee therefore urge now that you should make a special effort to attend the meeting at 7 o'clock on Wednesday March 1st and discuss the whole question of the future of Queens' House. They want to know whether it is the wish of the College to close Queens' House or to continue it. If the latter they wish to be assured that they have the goodwill and active support of a large part of the college. Without this we must recognise failure and act accordingly.

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