

AHP to Change its Name?

David Jones

John Rowan (*S&S*, November 1995) has written about talk, in the USA and here, of changing AHP's name because we welcome non-psychologists as members. Guy Gladstone (letter in this issue) and other AHP members are worried that 'registration' or the British Psychological Society will force matters.

When I was chair of governors of Belleville School in Battersea I learnt something new about the title 'psychologist'. Parents had attacked the head teacher, Richard Wynn, for not doing anything about 'various forms of dyslexia' that a 'psychologist' had, for a fee, diagnosed in their children. Richard knew none of the children were dyslexic. (Muddling up 'd' and 'b', for example, is quite normal when you are seven years old.) Eventually, with the help of the Area Educational Psychologist, the parents were reassured. They then wrote to the British Psychological Society (BPS) complaining about the activities of the rogue 'psychologist'. The BPS replied sympathetically but pointed out that anyone can call themselves a psychologist and as the person concerned was not a member of the BPS they could do nothing about him. With this sort of incident in mind the BPS set up a working party to see how the title 'psychologist' could be restricted by law. Government departments, professional bodies, those who employ psychologists and client groups were all consulted and, assisted by a parliamentary lawyer, the BPS prepared a draft Bill.

The Department of Health says it will not initiate legislation to protect the title 'psychologist', so the BPS would need to find an MP willing to propose their Bill (just as the osteopaths did to protect their professional title). Each year about 250 organisations approach the 20 MPs who are successful in the annual ballot for Private Members' Bills. Having got over that hurdle the BPS would need cross-party support for the Bill to reach the statute book. Most Private Members' Bills fail at an early stage of the parliamentary process. It seems unlikely, then, that the title 'psychologist' will become protected in the near future. But it does seem worth looking at the consequences for the AHP, and for humanistic psychologists generally, if it did become a protected title. Would we have to change our name?

An article in the March issue of the BPS house magazine, *The Psychologist*, says the proposed Bill is worded so that 'members of other professions who make use of psychological techniques and skills by offering psychological services as psychiatrists, teachers, personnel managers, psychotherapists, nurses, and so on, are unaffected by the (proposed) legislation provided they do not also claim to be psychologists . . . Activities where the purpose is the dissemination of academic knowledge are explicitly excluded from the definition of "psychological services".' The proposed Bill also explicitly avoids having anything to do with regulation of the titles 'psychotherapist', 'psychoanalyst' and

'analytical psychologist'.

So the AHP and its members will not be inconvenienced by the Bill if it becomes law. The Executive Secretary of the BPS confirmed this in a letter to John Rowan (20th February) saying 'humanistic psychology practitioners are actually claiming to offer psychotherapy, counselling, education and group facilitation as opposed to "psychological services" and hence they do not come

within the scope of the Act... *The wording of the Act is so framed that I would not see it as necessary for The Association for Humanistic Psychology to need to change its name*' (My italics.) And the rogue psychologist? He has no cause for fear either, so long as he does not call himself a psychologist and offer psychological services. He could simply call himself an educational consultant and carry on as before!

Good Press

Readers often complain about press coverage of counselling and psychotherapy. Why not exercise some power and send all examples (clippings or easy to read photocopies please) of good, bad or mixed press coverage to David Jones at the editorial address listed inside the front cover — even if you think we must have seen them ourselves? (We probably haven't!) We will comment on them, print them and alert the newspaper or magazine concerned — and their editors do take this type of feedback seriously.

Hester Lacey in the *Independent on Sunday* (3rd March) wrote a well informed piece about BAC and UKCP stemming from Bernard Manning's application to join BAC. (Bernard Manning is the racist and sexist comedian popular among sections of the police and the prison service and others who still find his 'jokes' funny). The BBC put him up to faking an application form for membership of BAC and then did an exposé.) Hester Lacey pointed out that all those with a genuine interest in counselling, all those in fact who work with people, such as social workers, advisers, indeed members of any of the helping and caring professions, need BAC as an essential source of information and can join. She was clear about the distinction between membership and

accredited members and showed that rogues like Manning who do not apply in good faith are not a real threat to the system. The episode points up the need, though, for both BAC and UKCP to feel less beleaguered, to be less shabbily treated by the press (including the BBC) and for their recognition by the Department of Health to be formalised and made public. Hester Lacey interviewed Lynne Walsh of BAC and Paul Zeal of UKCP and quoted them appropriately. Her piece ended with the views of Andrew Samuels, Professor of Jungian psychology at Essex University (and frequent contributor to *Self & Society*) on the importance for society of counselling and psychotherapy, and referred to the action group Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility.