A NEW DEPARTMENT OF ANAESTHETICS

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The post-graduate educational activities of the Faculty and the inauguration and management of an examination for Fellowship of the Faculty are now well known as Faculty achievements. The Board of Faculty felt, however, that since the Faculty is the national academic centre of British anaesthesia, it should play some part in research into the subject. Ideally, research is carried on by workers free from the responsibility of maintaining an anaesthetic service in a busy hospital and the instruction of undergraduates. Furthermore, it is essential that those engaged in research into a subject with such a wide field as anaesthesia need a close liaison and co-operation with departments of the basic sciences. All these facilities could be made available in the Royal College of Surgeons.

The Board of Faculty, therefore, put their case to the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons with the request that 3,000 sq. ft. of space be allocated in the new buildings of the College for the establishment of a Department of Anaesthetics.

The Council, of course, saw the need for such a department within the College, and instructed its Building Committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Stanford Cade, to consider the problem in con-
sultation with the Faculty and allocate suitable space. At that time, all the space in the new buildings had been allocated, but there was an area on the top floor of the new Nuffield College which, although set aside for another purpose, seemed ideally situated for this development (top left, fig. 1). The Building Committee decided that the need for a Department of Anaesthetics was so great that the whole of this area, some 3,600 sq. ft., should become the Department of Anaesthetics.

This, of course, was all that could be desired, for in this situation the new department would be in direct communication with the Department of Physiology, which is on the top floor of the main building.

The Council showed its determination to advance the science of anaesthesia by accepting this somewhat bold proposal of its Building Committee and by requesting the Faculty to consult immediately with the architect and submit detailed plans for the new Department. The Board of Faculty realized that, however carefully planned, no department can be made exactly as an unknown Director of that department would wish. Nevertheless, information was sought from all over the country and many research units were visited. With the resulting information, plans were drawn up which are likely to meet all the requirements of even the most exacting Director (fig. 2). Furthermore, the dividing walls will be so constructed that the size of rooms could be altered with a minimum of expense and labour. It is anticipated that the building of the Department will be completed about the middle of 1955.

Two things remain to be done. One is to select the staff for the Department, and the other—even more difficult—is to find the finance required to run it, some £12,000 per annum. It must be realized that the College, with the best will in the world, cannot possibly add this burden to its overstrained finances. It is up to us—the British anaesthetists—to support the vision of the College Council by finding the funds needed to establish a Research Unit in our academic centre. We must not only seize, but also seek opportunities to gain the interest of those who may be able to help. Here is an opportunity for all, medical and lay, to assist in a project which will help to establish for all time British anaesthesia in the leading position which it at present holds in the world.