

## Editorial

# THE MEDICAL SCHOOL

The need for a medical school building in Malta has been a long-felt one. In order to appreciate how very urgent is this need, one has but to mention that the only facilities available for an average number of fifty students are the very limited ones generously made available to the University by the Medical and Health authorities. These include a lecture hall, limited library accommodation, Students' laboratories within the Pathology Unit and resident accommodation for students doing obstetric firms and casualty work.

Agreement on the site for the building of the proposed Medical School has now been reached between the Government of Malta and the Royal University. The Malta Government has most generously granted the site, and the University now awaits the drawing up of the deed for transfer of these lands. Moreover, the construction of the Medical School will be financed by grants from Colonial Development and Welfare Funds. A provision of £66,000 has been made for this purpose and the money has to be made use of by April 1960.

The Malta Government must, however, help further if this scheme is to materialise within the relatively short time that remains. The administrators of the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund require assurances that recurrent expenditure be shouldered by the Government before they release the money for capital expenditure. The Council of the University has given the assurances that the Medical School will be given priority in the University budget as from 1960. But these assurances can only take the form of guarantees when Government increases the yearly grant to the University by

£7,000; this is the estimated figure for maintenance of the Medical School and its services. We have only to think of the recent past to appreciate how important is the question of guaranteeing recurrent expenditure. The Evans laboratories in Valletta have had to remain closed for the long period of eight years as no grants for recurrent expenditure were made by the Government until February 1959. These spacious laboratories for the Science and Engineering Faculties have for years remained unused; a silent indictment of the lack of understanding of the University's role in higher education.

The requirements of the Medical School have been planned over the past year; the planning has now reached an advanced stage and is under the direction of Mr. England Sant Fournier. The Medical School is visualised as an imposing building overlooking the Pieta' sea front and in architectural harmony with the dominating building of St. Luke's Hospital. All student amenities will be grouped in the ground floor. Provision has been made for common rooms, games rooms, cafeteria, committee room and changing rooms. The Maltese medical student will at last be able to pursue his studies, as is done by his colleagues all over the world, in a University environment with facilities for study and amenities necessary to lighten the full time burden of medical education.

A department of Dental Surgery will be also housed in the ground floor. The Administrative Services and the Research departments will be grouped in the first floor, and the Library, Medical Museum and the Department of Pathology will be housed in the second floor.

The third floor will include a lecture theatre and two lecture rooms to seat 60 and 40 students respectively. It will perhaps interest the reader to know that examinations will be held in these lecture halls: it will have to be a "regretful farewell" to the dear old Aula Magna. A number of demonstration rooms will also be available in the third floor as well as a well-equipped medical photography unit. From the third floor the Medical School will be connected to St. Luke's Hospital by a bridge to be used for bringing patients for lecture demonstrations and to provide an easy access to the hospital wards.

The Medical School will be built in the low-lying green belt along the Pieta' side of St. Luke hospital. The site is a well-chosen one for it combines seclusion with close proximity to the teaching hospital. The main entrance to the Medical School will be reached from the Pieta' main road; this factor is another of the advantages of the site, for a few minutes walk will make it possible to

utilise one of the Island's main thoroughfares along which run several bus routes. Built on sloping ground, the Medical School will look out on the impressive panorama of the Valletta and Floriana bastions rising upward from the seas of Pieta' creek and Sliema Harbour. There are some of the factors among many others that make us eager to see this project speedily completed.

With the construction of the Medical School, and with the various facilities which shall be available because of its proximity to the hospital, it will be possible, one hopes, to hold conferences and international gatherings and organise activities both at graduate and undergraduate level. Last but not least, we shall expect to see considerable increase in the research programmes of the various departments, and we also hope that the Medical School will serve to focus the attention of many outside medicine on the needs of encouraging and subsidising these research programmes.