

THE CORNISH LANGUAGE BOARD

THIS Board has been set up by the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies and the Cornish Gorsedd with the object of promoting the study and use of the Cornish Language. It has already assumed responsibility for the linguistic activities of the two bodies which founded it, namely the language publications of the Federation and the examinations and competitions of the Gorsedd, and will also seek to promote its objects by any other means which may prove possible.

The Board was formed because many people felt the need for a single body to co-ordinate policies and plans relating to the language. Although this had long been one of the main interests of both Federation and Gorsedd, neither had been concerned with it exclusively and indeed there had been no society or body with responsibility for all aspects of the revival and study of the language. The previous division of responsibility between Federation and Gorsedd had come into existence in a somewhat haphazard and illogical manner, and had sometimes led to misunderstanding and unnecessary duplication of effort.

The President of the Federation and the Grand Bard are ex-officio co-chairmen of the Board, and the representatives of the two founding bodies form a majority of its members, who also include representatives of the Royal Institution of Cornwall, the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society and the Cornwall Education Committee, as well

as certain members invited to serve as individuals. The Board is thus widely representative of various societies concerned with the language; its officers include Mr. H. J. Miners (Treasurer), Mr. P. A. S. Pool (Secretary), Mr. E. G. R. Hooper (Chief Examiner) and Mr. M. Taperell (Examination Secretary).

It is intended that the Board will in due course become self-supporting financially, but its initial finance has been provided by generous loans from the Federation and the Gorsedd totalling £500. The Board will send an annual report on its activities, with audited accounts, to the two founding bodies and to the other societies represented on it.

At its first two meetings held during 1967 the Board began the task of planning for future years and deciding on the priorities to be given to many urgent projects, particularly in the field of publication. After careful consideration it has prepared a statement of policy, some of the most important features of which are as follows:—

- (a) The Board has no connection with any political organisation.
- (b) It considers that Unified Cornish as now in use provides an acceptable common basis for spelling modern writings in the language, but recognizes that it has little significance for more advanced linguistic studies.
- (c) The object of the revival of Cornish should be to make it readily available as an optional second language for those Cornish people who want it, but the Board does not aim at seeing Cornish replace English as the main language of Cornish people, and has no wish to force Cornish on anyone.

During 1968 the Board will publish a re-print of the 1953 Cornish-English Dictionary, an addition to the series of text extracts for the use of students, and a recording of passages of Cornish readily available in print as an aid to correct pronunciation. As long-term projects it is also proposed to prepare an entirely new Cornish-English Dictionary and definitive scholarly editions of the Cornish Texts to replace the inaccurate and unobtainable editions of Norris and Stokes. The latter project in its entirety will involve expenditure beyond the financial resources of the Board, making some form of outside help essential, yet it is hoped to make a start in the reasonably near future by publishing a full edition of one of the shorter texts. As a practical step to assist those seeking to study Cornish, arrangements are in hand for all publications in the language, whether published by the Board, the Federation, or by others, to be included in one list and available from one source.

Eventually the Board hopes to arrange for Cornish to be available as a subject at all G.C.E. and C.S.E. examination levels, but until this is possible it will hold its own examinations in three grades as previously sponsored by the Gorsedd, but with a complete revision of the syllabus to be undertaken in 1968 and effective from 1969 onwards.

The Board recognises that the revival of Cornish for modern use will require considerable extension of the existing vocabulary, in order to cover things and concepts not existing when the language was traditionally spoken. A committee of the Board will consider the basis on which such new words should be admitted to the language, and will give careful attention to the way in which such problems are handled in other Celtic countries.

Although the task before the Board is an immense one involving many years of work, its members have now the great advantage of working as a team instead of in isolation or in small unco-ordinated groups, and will give fully of their knowledge and enthusiasm in order to continue and develop the devoted labours of the pioneers of the revival of Cornish. The Board seeks the understanding and co-operation of all concerned with Cornish, whether with the academic study of the language or its popular revival, and whether in Cornwall or elsewhere. It recognises that resources available in Cornwall will almost certainly be insufficient to achieve all that needs to be done, particularly at the higher academic levels, and will welcome and, where possible, encourage competent projects for research and publication originating elsewhere.

The Federation and the Gorsedd had common founders and have always worked closely together for the good of Cornwall; it must be the hope of all that this joint venture, in the part of their work which was always closest to the hearts of those founders, will flourish and bear fruit. Not long before his death, our late President *Mordon* said that one generation had put Cornish on its feet, and that another must make it walk. That will be the task of the Board.

P.A.S.P.