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President's Page

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The minutes of the annual Executive Board Meeting are worth your reading. They synopsise a vocal and progressive discussion by the largest number of delegates yet assembled for a Federation session.

There were two important chairs noticeably empty at the table, however. For one, signor Donald A. McGowan, our dynamic Moderator, was absent because of surgical convalescence that is now complete. Mr. M. R. Kneiff, our giant Executive Secretary through the trying years of infancy and adolescence, has been forced to curtail his activities due to illness. In appreciation of his tolerance and help over the years the Board elected Ray to the position of Consultant so that his place will be waiting always for the inspiring occasions when he can be present.

The Roll Call of Officers and Delegates evokes another impressive point. The efforts expended by these men in time, expense (transportation, hotels, meals, and so forth), in physical output are all personal — their free-will contribution to the cause of Catholic Action in medicine. Even the journeys involved in the inauguration of new Guilds is an expense assumed usually by the invited officer of the Federation. This exemplary self-sacrifice could be a key to the tremendous growth of the Guild movement in recent years.

Again, the annual meeting is more than just the day of the Executive Board session. The preparation of the booth, for example, is a time consuming project. The booth is set up in Exhibition Hall on the Sunday preceding the A.M.A. convention and requires personal supervision. Then friendly doctors, with enthusiasm and without thin skins, must staff the booth constantly from Monday through Friday. In the minutes of the meeting, the mirthful guardian angel of this whole effort is listed simply as Dr. Gerard P. J. Griffin, Brooklyn, Chairman of the Exhibit. Gerry has survived a damaged heart and cardiac surgery in its pioneer days to emerge an inspiring co-ordinator. The officers and volunteer delegates rotate through the hours of duty. Again, this is all done in the spirit of personal thanks for their gift of Faith.

The most striking example of this came from Dr. James Nix, Jr. of New Orleans. Because of his vast experience in the care of religious — approximately thirty-three Orders receive his complimentary service — we asked his help in formulating a plan for the health care of religious. By train he traveled thirty-six hours to join a three hour preliminary discussion. He then immediately reboarded for the trip home. All this he did to make sure that many more religious would be assured of adequate medical care.

It is little wonder, then, that Father John J. Flanagan, S.J., at the Memorial Mass in St. Nicholas Church, told a capacity congregation that "great men have preceded us, but great men are in our midst." In Federation acquaintances, we find these great men present in every Guild and every diocese, men whose working norm is not time-eroding and material but permanent and supernatural.

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