

IF IT is true that most people still find their major fulfilment in work, then being interviewed is an important event in one's life. It will, therefore, be important to give very careful thought before making final application for a position. Even if the shortlisting stage has been reached, a careful review of where in the country the post is, or will be, could be important, unless it is assumed that the position will only be held for a few months.

Life is not all work, and the question to be asked is "Can I live in the area?" It is surprising how many preconceived ideas there are about certain parts of the country. I can well remember weekend journeys by road between Cannock, Staffordshire, and Newcastle in the 1950s. No motorway then. The journey took me through Sheffield to the north.

The road was the A61 and it passed all the steelworks that could be imagined. I certainly had a view of Sheffield in more than one sense of that word. Imagine my surprise when having been invited to speak by the Sheffield Branch of the Rcn in the mid-1960s, I stayed the night at Lodge Moor Hospital. What lovely countryside I saw the next morning.

If a pre-interview visit is not possible, write to the local authority for details of the area. If schoolchildren are involved, seek information on the type and organisation of education in the town; it is particularly important to know of O- and A-level opportunities. A knowledge of the price of housing is, of course, essential. A local paper can be delivered by post. Up-to-date books in the local city library are another source of information. Does the new area cater for your interests? It is no use being an addict to serious music and live concerts if the nearest concert hall is 100 miles away. If you find this out *after* you have taken the job your moans about being deprived will soon irritate your new colleagues.

No candidate for a senior position will succeed if she has not remembered to read the latest reports such as *Patients First* and *Organisational and Management Problems of Mental Illness Hospitals*. This latter report gives clues on the overall management of hospitals. Always be ready to apply where appropriate the recommendations of a specialist report to the general situation. A re-reading of the Salmon report – particularly the section dealing with the role of the nursing officer – is essential reading. If there is criticism of the present structures, a two-minute discussion on the major principles of Salmon, led by the candidate, has even strong opponents thinking twice. The



How it may be just the job!

Concluding his tips and advice on top job hunting, Anthony Carr, Area Nursing Officer for Newcastle upon Tyne, stresses the importance of "discovering" a new area of work, and how to impress the interview panel.

main reason may be that the questioner has never read it, or it was so long ago he has forgotten it.

Important government legislation is also another must. A casual, "I believe the NHS Bill has run into some trouble even at Clause 1 at committee stage, and that they have been discussing it for several weeks now" is bound to help the candidate as the committee nod their heads. The Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act is also a possible discussion point. These are not tricks, they are serious points. Interviewing committees want people who show interest in what is going on in the Health Service.

Where the candidate is placed in the order of interviewing can be important. (I would like some work to be done on the placement of candidates selected for interviews.) Does the first candidate suffer a considerable disadvantage? Is this the warm-up session where interviewers forget their essential question which is given to all the others? I really do not know. I personally believe that to go in about half way through does help – depending, of course, if the candidate is suitable for the job in personal quality terms.

To go in for interview third out of five can be very helpful depending, of

course, on the opposition. Two candidates performing just average have lost if the third candidate can produce that extra something. The last two candidates then tend to be matched with the third. If, of course, candidates know what the interviewing committee is looking for, they can plan accordingly. Most committees are looking for a replacement. Age, experience and qualifications have all helped towards drawing up a shortlist.

It seems that very few interviews are geared to finding out the personal qualities of a person, and how these match with the organisational requirements. Many candidates feel they must always agree with the views of the interviewer. This is not always a correct assumption.

Let me explain. Say the new post is concerned with commissioning a new hospital. The question is asked: "Do you not think we need a day nursery for this hospital?" The response may be: "I would have thought so a few years ago. I have had experience of this, of course, and since then I do believe that the ideal is for the mother and baby to be together for, say, the first two to three years".

In all probability you have just challenged a person's views which the few who know would not dare to do. Leave it there and one vote goes against you. You pause. If there is no response you continue "... perhaps a good compromise would be to try to establish a nursery school so that children can appreciate pre-school education and the mother is happy to leave her child". Smiles all round, and committee members write down "Bright girl – should do well standing up to Dr or Mr 'X'".

In all replies, avoid giving the yes/no reply, even if offered in those terms. As the interviewers try to build up a professional picture of the candidate, help them by putting flesh on the bones. When in a very tight corner it may be best to answer with one word: "I see, Miss Brown, that you have never been a nursing officer". "No". Pause, looking the interviewer in the eyes. Interviewers do not like pauses. You may be asked to explain. If not, do not attempt to do so unless requested.

One last point, do not over talk. Give a measured response for a minute or so and wait that second to see if the questioner wishes you to continue. Try to enjoy the interview – it is a real experience of life. Learn from it, and just once in the interview try to raise a smile with the committee – it may lighten a very heavy day and, although you may not be successful, they will thank you.