

all the practitioners in his area. The Commission's framework would serve as a starting point; and each area would then fill in the structure according to its own views.

These local schemes would be sent to the secretary of the Commission, who would have them summarized, and would then return a composite summary to each local secretary. Having given full consideration to the new data thus obtained, each "area of practitioners" would submit its findings to the Planning Commission. From this point the Commission, with access to outside experts (Ministry of Health, etc.), would be in a position to construct a definite scheme truly representative of the views of the entire profession. The Services members would be consulted through the appropriate channels.

Eventually a concrete plan would be submitted once again to the various areas for amendment and final touching-up. The conclusions thereafter rendered to the Commission should enable it to draw up a final scheme, which would require very little discussion by the profession.

In dealing with such a comprehensive matter, so vital to every branch of medical service and to the country, the method of procedure suggested here cannot fairly be considered cumbersome. Even in these days of stress time must be found in order to construct a successful scheme. To hasten a decision, to fail in consulting every member of the profession, would be to invite disaster on a noble project.—I am, etc.,

Bath, Jan. 20.

CHARLES R. GIBSON.

SIR.—Of sixty-seven names, forty are of consultants, eight are of paid officials, the other nineteen are not definitely stated to depend on general practice alone for their living. What do the general practitioners of the country think about this? How will they voice their views; how protect their vital interests?—I am, etc.,

Bradford, Jan. 4.

THOMAS SAVAGE.

Medicine in a Changing World

SIR.—To me, and I expect to most of us, Sir John Orr's address to the Leeds Division (January 18, p. 73) reads as most restrained and reasonable and free from any suspicion of entering into party politics—unless his opinion that poverty had something to do with malnutrition was in your eyes entering into that forbidden field. But that was accepted by every speaker at the B.M.A. Conference on Malnutrition in April, 1939, and I remember hearing Mr. L. S. Amery going further and saying that a "great many" industries simply "could not" (not "would not") "pay sufficiently high wages to provide adequate nourishment for a family with three children." There would not therefore appear any cause for you to use this Leeds address as an occasion to give us a lecture (p. 91) on allowing our "political emotions" to warp our judgment and suggest that this had happened to Sir John. You continue, however, "This is perhaps well illustrated by reference to the subject of Sir John Orr's lecture," and your leader on this occasion makes a little contact with fact as did that unfortunate one on shelters.

Anyhow it is hoped that you will let us have another leader in which you will tell us just what your qualifications are which entitled you to lecture us on how we are to live our lives and why your remark about members allying themselves with one or other of the political parties "somewhat ostentatiously" is not just impertinence. Perhaps a prize might be offered to anyone guessing correctly what party you had in mind. It was, however, with some relief that one read that "a doctor may cast his vote as freely as any other man," for this presumably includes members of the B.M.A., although this is not made quite clear. A charming chance led you to introduce the old tag, "The cobbler must stick to his last."—I am, etc.,

Grimsby, Jan. 20.

S. W. SWINDELLS.

SIR.—I think you are right in saying (January 18, p. 91) that medical men as such should not segregate themselves into political groups. That is true; since politics is not really the best kind of sociology. One who proposes to cure the world's ills by politics—that is, polemics—is like the doctor who proposes to stamp out disease by multiplying bottles of medicine. Politics and pills are at best stop-gaps or temporary expedients. True hygiene, medical and social, should make such things unnecessary. These and other parallels are very valuable, and

I hold that every intelligent doctor is, or should be, a sociologist. Also, as you yourself add, "The medical profession has within its numbers those who, more than any other group of men and women, are competent to make a statement on the physiological and psychological needs of human society." I further maintain (and could prove) that this holds of the general practitioner, and, above all, of the country practitioner with his all-round field of observation and action, more than of the specialist with his arbitrarily restricted *Fach*. The truth is that in a proper system of medical services the specialists should be subordinate or ancillary to the general practitioner, not his masters as at present. That the G.P. does not always, or even generally, take advantage of his unique opportunities and thus tends to evade his social responsibilities is due to various causes which I shall not attempt to enumerate here. The facts are, however, I am sure, as stated.—I am, etc.,

Helmsley, Yorkshire, Jan. 26.

A. J. BROCK.

Trends in Nutrition

SIR.—In the lecture by Sir John Boyd Orr (January 18, p. 73) many statements are made which have already been challenged by me (vide, e.g., *Edin. med. J.*, 1940, 47, 425). There is one, however, which I have not had the opportunity of dealing with before. On page 74 it is stated: "About fifteen years ago the subject [the influence of nutrition on susceptibility to infectious disease] was investigated by a group of workers associated with the Rowett Institute, including Prof. Mackie and the late Prof. J. J. R. McLeod. In experiments with farm animals it was found that certain immunological reactions were considerably affected by the nature of the ration."

The context shows that it is to be inferred that the more adequate the diet the greater in amount are the antibodies produced and the less the susceptibility to infectious disease. Apart from the misuse here as elsewhere in the article of the word "nutrition," it has to be stated without reservation that no such conclusion could warrantably be drawn from the results of these investigations as they are recorded in the *Lancet* of May, 1931 (1, No. 5622) and the *British Journal of Experimental Pathology*, 1932, 13, 328.

Since they had been cited by him in published articles and otherwise on previous occasions in support of his present thesis, I naturally expected mention to be made here of certain other observations on similar lines conducted by himself and subordinates during this same period. As a consequence of these it was alleged that the addition of a mineral supplement (containing a high proportion of calcium) to a ration of bran and barley conferred on the rabbits receiving it protection from the effects of an intravenous injection of human tubercle bacilli. I am able to state quite categorically from the protocols and other highly pertinent details, both of which I possess, that this claim should never have been made.—I am, etc.,

Aberdeen, Jan. 18.

J. P. MCGOWAN.

SIR.—It was with profound horror that I read one sentence in Sir John Boyd Orr's otherwise fine article, "Trends in Nutrition" (January 18, p. 73), in which he said: "The Canadian Medical Association has published an excellent booklet showing the kind of diet needed for different families and the cost, and has thereby *adjusted propaganda to economic realities*" (my italics). Stated in less "diplomatic" language this would read: "The Canadian Medical Association has published an excellent booklet showing not only the kind of diet needed for different families, but also the cost, thereby instructing us that we must popularize diets in relation to their cost and not to their suitability, for there are many people without sufficient money with which to purchase the best." Dietetic realities essential for health are to be subservient to "economic realities."

The tragedy of the statement lies not only in the fact that we are directed to prostitute our guardianship of the people's health but in that it is the product of old-fashioned thinking. The fundamentals of the sentence are, first, that there are certain dietetic needs which are known to exist. They are necessary for the health of the body, which was made by God and not by man. No man can lessen those needs by suggestions, laws, regulations, high cost, or any other means; they are absolute. Every fresh research shows that our know-