

industrial disputes. Of the time lost through sickness, as much as one-third might be due to such psychological causes as a man being employed in a job to which he was not suited, or to a lack of a sense of comradeship and team spirit among workers. Dr. Maule's theme was developed by Dr. C. B. FRISBY (National Institute of Industrial Psychology), who said that the adjustment of the worker depended on his achieving a balance against various environmental pressures. The proper design of machines should include consideration of the worker's convenience and comfort, and Dr. Frisby suggested that the training of engineers who were to design such machines should include a study of human behaviour. The importance of a system of wage incentives and bonuses which could be easily and fully understood by the workers was stressed by Miss SHIMMIN and by Mr. LESLIE BUCK, both of the Medical Research Council's industrial psychology unit.

In a session on the psychology of ageing Mr. D. B. BROMLEY (lecturer in psychology, Liverpool) reported experiments which indicated that the rate of creative intellectual output decreases after a peak period at 30-35 years of age, a suggestion which confirmed the work of other authors. It was not only that older people had fewer good ideas, but they were also apparently less able to discern the worth of the ideas they did have. Mr. Bromley concluded, however, with a caution that present research methods in this field are unsatisfactory and findings sometimes difficult to appraise.

#### Anthropology and Blood Groups

The Aran Islands have long been looked upon as the last outpost of Celtic culture and language. Historians, however, have suggested that the inhabitants are not pure Celts because garrisons of English soldiery on the islands intermarried freely with the inhabitants, a suggestion which found support in the anthropological survey of Hooton and Dupertuis in the 1930's. Dr. E. HACKETT (reader in clinical pathology, Dublin), in a study of the distribution of ABO and Rh blood groups, brought further support for this view by showing that the Aran Islanders bear a much closer resemblance to the population of the eastern counties of England in this respect than to the population of the western portion of the Irish mainland. He had also found the "English" pattern of blood-group distribution among the people living in the counties which used to make up the Pale.

#### Taeniasis in Britain

Between 3% and 6% of domestic cattle in the British Isles are infected with *Taenia saginata*, according to Dr. P. H. SILVERMAN. He thought the source of their infection was either the drinking of water directly polluted by human sewage or the contamination of pasture by the droppings of seagulls which had consumed human excreta at seaside outfalls. Dr. Silverman pointed out that a significant amount of meat for human consumption was never inspected, and stressed the need for a comprehensive meat inspection service. It was also important that medical practitioners should be aware of the problem and that methods of disposal of sewage, particularly at the seaside, should be reviewed.

#### Underwater Swimming and Diving

On the final day of the meeting the Physiology Section considered some of the hazards of deep-sea diving and prolonged underwater swimming. In his introduction of the subject, Dr. H. J. TAYLOR (Royal Naval Physiological Laboratory) pointed out that the dangers were twofold: first, that any gas, physiological or inert, had irritant or toxic effects if breathed at high pressure; and, secondly, decompression. Oxygen respired at a pressure of over two atmospheres induced epileptiform seizures, but the Royal Navy had lately achieved some success in a search for a drug to increase resistance to this effect. The mechanical and technological

methods which are being used to improve man's efficiency whilst working under water were described by Captain W. O. SHELFORD, R.N. (retired), of Messrs. Siebe, Gorman and Co. By using a new closed-circuit system operated from the surface it was now possible for a diver to operate at a depth of 600 ft. (183 m.) below sea-level.

#### Future of the B.A.

In a final press conference the president, Professor BLACKETT, intimated that the British Association hoped to extend its activities. An approach made to a few major industrial concerns for additional funds had met with an encouraging response, and with these financial resources in view plans were being made for a series of short interim meetings during which problems of urgent topical importance to scientists would be discussed. There was also a prospect of a special meeting for young people being held next year.

### MENTAL HYGIENE

The European League for Mental Hygiene and the World Federation for Mental Health held their annual conferences in Copenhagen from August 11 to 17.

The European League, under the presidency of Professor HANS HOFF (Vienna), discussed the mental hygiene of the family and the young child. Professor Hoff, in his opening paper, strongly supported the view that the normal development of a child depends on its mother's attitude towards it. Children born or conceived during the occupation in Austria, and in Germany the so-called *Besatzungskinder*, were in danger of both social and maternal rejection. However, the great majority of mothers, even those who had been raped, showed a great love for their children and refused to have them adopted. In Germany, where there were some 40,000 mothers with *Besatzungskinder*, only 118 mothers had consented to be separated permanently from these children. Professor Hoff felt it was essential to have an adequate medical advisory service to deal with the psychological difficulties of all young mothers, but especially the unmarried ones. The desire for abortion needed to be dealt with from the psychological angle as well as the physical. In Austria therapeutic abortion was permitted if the mental state of the mother was so disturbed as to involve a risk of suicide.

Dr. DORIS ODLUM, the immediate past president, then gave an account of the medical and social services for the family and young child in England and Wales. Discussing the psychological pros and cons of confinement in the home or hospital, she said that on the whole she thought home confinement was better for the baby, the other children, the husband, and in many cases for the mother also, as it did not lead to so much disturbance of home life and family relationships; but, if the home background was unsuitable, or the birth likely to be difficult, hospital confinement was preferable. Education and preparation for parenthood were increasing and from the physical angle were fairly adequate, but the psychological aspect was still not fully appreciated. The importance of the father's role had only recently been realized, and facilities for educating fathers were now increasing.

Professor REITER (Denmark) said that, although his country had a high standard of living and one of the best systems of social service in the world, it also had the highest incidence of divorce and suicide. There was considerable unrest among adolescents, and illegal abortion was rife, but a new law had recently been passed which enabled a woman who wished to terminate her pregnancy to have her case investigated by a special tribunal. He felt that they were in danger of creating an abortion neurosis. Alcoholism was also a serious problem, with a relatively high incidence of alcoholic psychoses. This suggested that

security and material welfare did not necessarily lead to psychological stability or human happiness.

A lively discussion followed. It was resolved that in view of the importance of the subject a questionnaire should be sent to all the national leagues of mental hygiene, asking them to report on the social services for the family and young child in their countries and the mental health problems which had arisen in relation to them. A summary of these reports would be prepared and presented at the League's next annual conference in Vienna in September, 1958.

#### World Federation for Mental Health

"Problems of Growing Up in a Changing World" was the subject for debate at the meeting of the World Federation for Mental Health. Dr. MARGARET MEAD, the retiring president, opened the meeting with a paper on "Growing Up in Different Cultures." Growing up in normal families and in problem families were considered by Dr. DONALD BUCKLE (W.H.O.) and Dr. PAUL SIVADON (France) respectively. Dr. ERIC STROMGREN (Denmark) read a paper on the genetic aspects of mental health, in which he discussed the inheritance of Huntington's chorea and schizophrenia. The differing cultural patterns of separate ethnic groups within the same nation, and between nations, were reviewed by Professor OTTO KLINEBERG (U.S.A.) in a paper entitled "Growing Up for Co-operation or Conflict." Some of the problems of adolescence were discussed by Dr. ANNE AUDEUD-NAVILLE (Switzerland) in a paper on puberty and sexual morality, and Professor TSUNG YI-LIN (University of Taiwan, Formosa) spoke on delinquency in Chinese society.

In addition to the plenary sessions two special sessions were held: on the work of the United Nations in relation to the mental health problems of changing cultures, and on mental health and the work of the United Nations in the field of crime prevention and the treatment of offenders.

At the administrative session Dr. BROCK CHISHOLM (Canada) was inducted as president by Dr. MARGARET MEAD. At next year's conference in Vienna the subject for discussion will be "The Mental Health Problems of Refugees."

## Preparations and Appliances

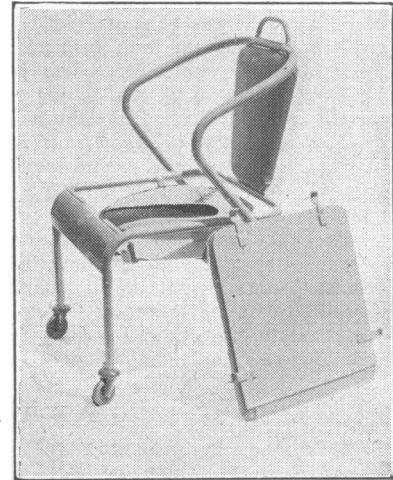
### A COMBINED COMMODE AND VISITORS' BEDSIDE CHAIR

Mr. MCKIM McCULLAGH, F.R.C.S., F.R.C.O.G., writes: Bedpan sessions are humiliating, undignified, and uncomfortable, and often fail in their object because of the mechanical difficulty of emptying the bowel and bladder whilst lying on one's back, poised on a bedpan on a soft bed. The bedpan has then to be removed by the nurse after cleaning the patient, and carried out covered by a small sheet to the sluice-room, in view of the ward patients and others who may be present. Surely these humiliating and unsightly duties can be abolished or reduced to a minimum.

With this object in view I have designed, with the aid of Messrs. Thackray, of Leeds, a commode chair which I think will be an aid to nursing and a contribution to the comfort and care of bed-patients, both medical and surgical. This structure is a tubular tub chair with a silent wheel on each front leg, a metal loop handle on the top of the back of the chair, a seat with metal holding-hooks, which can be lifted off, exposing a "perfection" bedpan in a rubber-covered metal cradle. This bedpan is so well hidden that visitors do not object to using the chair as a seat. The chair moves on its two front wheels, when it is eased off the ground by lifting the back of the chair with the loop handle. It is readily wheeled to the bedside and put in position. The seat is lifted and the patients are helped out on to the chair on one

or two occasions only; they do their own toilet and clamber back into bed. The nurse comes back at her own convenience, replaces the lid, and wheels the chair off to the sluice-room—a much more dignified procedure than carrying bedpans face-high. In the sluice-room the bedpan is emptied, washed, and sterilized, and a clean bedpan is placed in the chair.

The medical advantages to the patient of this chair are that the patients like it, as it is so comfortable. Cardiologists have investigated the strain caused by defaecation, and have found it so lessened by using a commode that they are now forbidding the use of bedpans. Ward nurses observe that



post-operative retention of urine is less frequent and that the rectum, and vagina in the case of female patients, are more efficiently emptied of faeces and clots if this commode is used.

The cleanliness of the bedpan with its narrow metal front edge is nearer gap-seat perfection than is the cleanliness of the wooden commode chair, which is so difficult to move, and its function is so obvious that visitors cannot be asked to sit down on it. Few matrons nowadays condone the use of wooden commodes, because of possible cross-infection.

Labour ward sisters approve of the use of this chair during labour; sitting on it allows the vertical weight of 7 or 8 lb. (3.2 or 3.6 kg.) to press on the os uteri and help its dilatation. By leaning forward the patient can press downwards on the fundus, during a pain, with her diaphragm. There is no danger of injury to the foetus if it is born unexpectedly into the bedpan, as the distance is short.

The most valuable aid of a bedside commode is that it encourages a patient to get in and out of bed soon after operation, which is the best possible post-operative exercise. To find a patient in a toilet with the door locked, and dead from pulmonary embolism several days after operation, is not unknown. Using a bedside commode early would lessen mental worry and physical inconvenience, especially for these slight-pyrexia patients who are so apt to develop embolism or thrombophlebitis.

I have been planning this commode for several years past, and feel that at last it is worthy of trial by those interested. I find it is looked on by nurses and sisters as a labour-saving device in ward work, as patients are encouraged to do more for themselves, and to do it earlier.

The chair can be procured from Messrs. Chas. F. Thackray, Ltd., Park Street, Leeds, or from their London Branch in Welbeck Street, W.1.

The Association of Psychiatric Social Workers has published in book form a symposium, *The Boundaries of Casework*. The book consists of 10 papers which were read at a residential refresher course held by the association in 1956. The symposium comprised five sections: psychiatric social work and social casework in other fields; psychotherapy and social casework; supervision, education, and social casework; social research and social casework; the caseworker, the welfare officer, and the administrator in the social services. In addition to the papers a summary of the discussion is included. *The Boundaries of Casework* is obtainable from the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, 1, Park Crescent, London, W.1, price 7s. 6d. net.