

awards made *before* the date of the freeze.—  
I am, etc.,  
Oxford.

W. G. BRADLEY.

SIR,—The recent modification by the Government of the award made by the independent Review Body created a dangerous precedent which many of us found difficult to swallow. For the first time the Government of the day declined to accept the full award and phasing, resulting in the general practitioner, and the general practitioner alone, losing £12m. to which he was entitled.

Nevertheless, bearing in mind the financial crisis, it was decided to acquiesce to this reduction of our just claim. Delay in implementation of the award is partly due to the days it languished in the hands of the Prime Minister before he made up his mind. Another factor is the complicated nature of the proposals and the lack of instruction and machinery to see them carried out without many weeks' delay. The present situation appears that the whole of this award shall be lost. This seems a clear breach of faith with the medical profession, as the Government had agreed to our modified scheme of implementation a few clear weeks before 20 July, the date of the freeze.

This last and ill-advised decision throws everything into the melting-pot, and the anger of general practitioners at being used as pawns in the political game creates an explosive situation. Many feel the doctors have been included in the freeze as a sop to some of the trade unions affected. Any future Minister of Health will find it very difficult to persuade the medical profession that any agreements made with him have a real chance of becoming concrete facts.—I am, etc.,

South Shields.

JOHN MCKEE.

SIR,—We bitterly regret the Government plans to further phase our long-awaited pay award and change in method of payment.

We urge the G.M.S. Committee to make the strongest possible objection to the proposal, especially as it seems to us that we are being singled out for particularly harsh treatment. In the list of groups affected which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* of 30 July no other group's award dates back further than 1 July, and all are employees, not contractors as we are.

The economic situation has already been taken into account by the phasing of our award. Many doctors have increased their commitments by employment of receptionists, assistants, etc. This proposed cut will mean for many a real drop in net income.

Surely we were given an absolute undertaking that the new award would date from 1 April 1966. We consider that we are now already being paid on the new basis, and that the Pool was abolished when the new basis of pay was agreed. Is the Pool now to be resurrected? We wonder what the legal position is.

The persistent refusal to reintroduce prescription charges, while at the same time dealing so harshly with us, must give rise to grave doubts as to the integrity of the Government. Our own work load has been greatly increased whilst the only body to really benefit has been the pharmacists, who have had an income rise of up to 40% and apparently will completely escape the "freeze."

We urge the G.M.S. Committee to consider every way in which pressure can be brought to bear upon the Government to exclude the doctors' pay award from the "freeze."—We are, etc.,

J. G. DELLER.

D. WILSON.

J. M. LONDON.

W. M. E. ANDERSON.

Talgarth, Brecon.

### Broken Faith

SIR,—Faith with the Government, our employer, has been broken, the Review Body stripped of its "independence" and "acceptance" of its findings has proved to be a farce.

The Prime Minister has every right to introduce a wage freeze if he believes this in the national interest, but surely he has no right to rescind past Government agreements? No longer can we have security in the machinery of the Health Service, a service which is proving too great a burden on the country's economy. Those of us with most of our working lives ahead must not allow this to continue.

The individual is helpless, but the B.M.A. are not. They must stand up to this intolerable political manoeuvring. We still have the opportunity to set up our own independent medical service to free us from this political yoke, to give us our independence, and to give the profession back its self-respect.

Why should the only road to security for one's practice and family lead only overseas?—I am, etc.,

Bransgore,  
Hampshire.

CHRISTOPHER H. WOOD.

### Independent Solution

SIR,—I hope the B.M.A. leaders will resist fully any attempt to further postpone our new "pay award."

Surely it must be clear that general practitioners are not in line for a new pay award at all. The negotiating teams have produced a base line for future pay awards. If the State is unable to afford a decent level of remuneration for its self-employed doctors then it is high time we set up our own independent stall to the ultimate benefit of our patients, the country, and ourselves.—I am, etc.,

Purton, Wilts.

J. K. HARTWELL.

### Interference in Doctors' Affairs

SIR,—It is quite clear to me that the trade unions are interfering in our N.H.S. affairs to an alarming extent. They seem prepared to go to any lengths to undermine the dignity of the profession. This contention is supported by the following:

(1) During our last crisis of discontent a trade union official, speaking on television, implied that doctors were emigrating in order to strengthen the hand of the remainder. What utter rubbish!

(2) Since the granting of the Review Body award there have been many comments by trade unionists equating us with their members. How can, say, the busmen's problems have the slightest similarity with our own? Remarks such as, "If the doctors get it why cannot we?" or, "If we cannot have it why should the doctors?" are commonplace.

(3) We have been caught in the "wage-

freeze" net regardless of the fact that our award was dated from 1 April 1966. I have little doubt, Sir, that the Government, in its weakness, has thrown this one as a sop to the trade unions.

Are we going to stand for this indirect control of our affairs by the unions? In my view, Sir, our freedom and principles are in far greater danger than at any time since 1948. Unless this unwarranted meddling by the unions is stopped, I, for one, have no wish to continue in the National Health Service.—I am, etc.,

Hartington,  
Derbyshire.

### Effect on Emigration

SIR,—The effect of the pay-award (that never was) on emigration figures could be most quickly assessed if a central bureau could be established, where all doctors who are emigrating would be asked to register, first when they have taken the first concrete steps, and secondly when they are actually embarking. As emigration among doctors is nearly always an action of protest, and as registration would afford another avenue for this protest to be expressed, on psychological grounds alone one would expect the registration to be near-complete.

Weekly figures would be a sensitive and early indication of any growth in the emigration rate. Regular publication of such figures would probably be politically expedient.—I am, etc.,

London S.E.22.

G. J. VAKKUR.

### Hospital Junior Staff

SIR,—Now that we are settled in our new homeland, it is sad to read the letters in the *B.M.J.* still wrangling over status and pay awards.

I am still concerned over the fate of the hospital service, whose future depends so much on its junior staff. Not only are they necessary as juniors but they are the consultants of the future.

Is it not surprising how few consultants write to suggest that instead of pay rises for the profession the extra money would be better spent increasing the number of consultant vacancies, as was recommended by the Platt committee? Certainly, up till last year, it was true to say that in many hospitals a third of the general surgery was done by junior staff, and no doubt the position is equally bad in other specialties, so it is ridiculous to argue that there is no room for expansion even in the present hospital accommodation.

The blame lies largely with senior doctors. If they were not so conservative and not so busy looking after their own affairs they would have little trouble in persuading the politicians to set the house in order. The Platt report, which the politicians accepted years ago, was fought all the way by many consultants. The reasons for this opposition, though not hard to find, are immaterial. The result is a dissatisfied junior staff and an absurdly high migration rate.

No wonder that 65% of the doctors in Tasmania are British graduates. I really don't understand how people can bury their heads in the sand for so long.—I am, etc.,

Hobart,  
Tasmania.

JOHN M. LARGE.