

Medical Notes in Parliament

Notification Fee for Measles and Whooping-cough

Mr. GROVES inquired on April 4 whether the decision to pay a smaller fee for notifications of measles and whooping-cough than the fee normally paid for notifications of other diseases was come to after consulting any body representative of the medical profession, and whether it was agreed to by any such body. Dr. ELLIOT answered that he had consulted the British Medical Association, who represented that the fee should be 2s. 6d. In fixing the fee at 1s. he had in mind the large number of notifications likely to be involved and the necessity for avoiding undue increases of public expenditure.

Conscription

Dr. ELLIOT, replying to Mr. Groves on April 9, said that arrangements had been announced that day under which medical practitioners registered with their age groups under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act would be liable to serve with the Forces as medical officers. Individual practitioners would be selected for the various areas through the machinery of the Central Medical War Committee and its local committees, with the object of avoiding the dislocation of civilian medical services or a shortage of doctors in the event of an air raid.

Medical Volunteers

Miss HORSBRUGH, replying to Mr. Liddall on April 9, said that of the 45,000 registered medical practitioners in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 3,001 had voluntarily joined the Forces as medical officers, in addition to those called up by virtue of their obligations as Territorial or Reserve officers. The officers of the Department were in consultation with those of the Service Departments with the object of securing a fair distribution of the available doctors between the Forces and the emergency and other civilian services.

Exemption of Medical Students

On April 9 Mr. GROVES asked the Minister of Labour whether he was aware that men registered as medical students before September 3, 1939, to be exempt from military service must have passed their first professional examination and completed two years of study in anatomy and physiology; and whether he would consider exempting from military service all men registered as medical students before September 3, 1939, while they were satisfactorily pursuing their studies. Mr. ERNEST BROWN said that after consultation with the Minister of Health and the Secretary of State for Scotland and with representatives of the medical teaching bodies, it was decided that medical students who had passed their first professional examination and had completed two terms (not years, as suggested in the question) of study in anatomy and physiology should be reserved under the schedule of reserved occupations. This arrangement secured adequate reservation of medical students at the present time, and he saw no reason for any change of the kind suggested by Mr. Groves.

Alien Doctors and Service with the Forces

Mr. GROVES asked the Minister of Health on April 9 if he would state the policy of the Central Medical War Committee in regard to alien doctors; and if, as it was apparently contemplated to call up compulsorily medical practitioners for professional services in connexion with the armed Forces, it was also intended to call up enemy alien medical men resident here, whether as refugees or otherwise, and thus preserve the practices of British doctors who were or would be serving in a professional capacity with the armed Forces. Dr. ELLIOT replied that the policy of the committee was governed entirely by the law affecting the right of alien doctors to practise in this country. Answering the latter part of the question, he pointed out that the National Service (Armed Forces) Act only applied to British subjects.

The Case of House Officers at Wolverhampton

Sir ROBERT BIRD asked on April 10 whether Dr. Elliot was aware that eleven house-physicians and house-surgeons of the Royal Hospital, Wolverhampton, were recruited on September 1 last into the Emergency Medical Service, and were informed that they would be retained in their then posts in the hospital for a period of three months from that date, and that one month later their appointments were cancelled without payment of salary. He asked that the same three months' salary should be paid to these eleven doctors as had been paid to all house officers recruited under the same class whose appointments had been cancelled under like circumstances. Miss HORSBRUGH replied that these practitioners were enrolled in the Emergency Medical Service last September on a three-months contract involving liability to be called up for service in the first instance at the Royal Hospital, Wolverhampton. No occasion arose for calling them up and their contracts accordingly lapsed without any question of remuneration. She was unable to agree that these officers received different treatment from others in comparable circumstances.

Mr. MANDER said the point that there was no need to call up these officers was a technicality. Was it proposed to deprive these officers, because they failed to fill in a certain form, of pay which was going to all their colleagues?

Miss HORSBRUGH said the case was not one of failing to fill in a form, nor was it a technicality. Certain officers in Walsall who were called up were liable to be sent to any part of the country where their services were required. Those who were not called up, but were merely enrolled, remained in their hospitals doing the same work as they were doing before. Officers had been called up only when it was necessary to utilize their services.

Answering a further question on the same subject by Mr. Hannah on April 11, Dr. ELLIOT said he could find no evidence that his regional officer promised payment to the doctors concerned. The only undertaking given was to receive claims for consideration.

Chairmen of Medical Boards.—Dr. ELLIOT, in answer to Mr. Groves on April 9, said that chairmen of medical boards for the examination of recruits were appointed by the Minister of Labour from recommendations which he [the Minister of Health] made to him after consideration by his medical officers of the names of all practitioners, over 4,000 in number, offering their services for this work through the Central Emergency Committee of the British Medical Association (as it then was). The considerations governing the selection were age, qualifications, previous experience in similar work, standing in the profession, and availability for this work. He had no knowledge whether any of the medical practitioners concerned were members of any particular association.

Daily Cost of A.R.P.—Sir JOHN SIMON gives £300,000 as the current daily rate of expenditure on air raid precautions, including the cost of first-aid services. This does not include the cost of emergency hospital accommodation and staff and ambulance services, including trains run in connexion with these services, the current daily rate of expenditure on which is some £73,000.

Notes in Brief

Sir John Anderson has been asked by the Cremation Society and by twenty-four local authorities to exercise his powers to make possible the cremation of those persons killed in air raids who had expressed their desire for cremation at death. He is in consultation with other Departments as to the means of meeting the point raised.

Returns of the numbers of school children in respect of whom billeting allowances are payable show that the numbers in the reception areas were: December, 434,000; January, 393,000; February, 365,000; March, 347,000. Mothers remaining in the reception areas in January numbered 19,500.

Of thirty-one camps built by the National Camps Corporation, Limited, six are now occupied and nine more will be occupied before the end of April. Whether further camps should be built will come under review in due course.