

negotiate concerning their objections *within the framework of the Act.*"

If our objections could have been met within the framework of the Act, why the plebiscite? Surely those of us who voted "No" did so because we believed that the Act itself required amendment in certain vital aspects. That situation has not changed at all, though there seems to be a conspiracy to make everyone believe that it has. The future well-being of our profession and of those we serve is at stake; it lies most assuredly in our own hands if we will but stand by our principles.—I am, etc.,

Hessel, E. Yorks.

R. HERMON.

National Service for Health

SIR,—Dr. H. B. O. Cardew (Jan. 4, p. 29) refers to the Labour Party publication called *National Service for Health* and states that the Act in no way conflicts with this announced statement of policy. This is a matter of opinion, since different people anticipate the results of the Act in different ways.

There can be no doubt, however, that in one important respect the statement of policy in that publication is directly at variance with a statement made on behalf of the Government in the House of Lords during the debate on the Bill. The booklet states on p. 18: "In the Labour Party's opinion, therefore, it is necessary that the medical profession should be organized as a national, full-time, salaried, pensionable Service." In the House of Lords the Earl of Listowel, the Postmaster-General, used these words: "It was not and never had been the policy of the Government to institute a full-time, salaried medical service, or indeed to do anything else that would wreck the whole health scheme from the outset." Perhaps Dr. Cardew would like to try and explain these diametrically opposed statements, which he has apparently preferred to overlook.—I am, etc.,

Hungerford, Berks.

D. H. STUART BOYD.

The Act and Freedom

SIR,—We have, thank God, won the first battle for freedom, but many of our profession still seem to think that the new "Health Act" is a measure about health. This is a fundamental mistake. The title is entirely misleading. The real object of the Act is complete political and economic power over the profession, hospitals, and patients. It is a major part of a vast scheme for planned control of the nation and of every individual in it. Already our liberty is immensely curtailed compared to what we had ten years ago; and month by month our freedom in all directions is being diminished.

We, the medical profession, are now the strongest and biggest obstacle to State domination and State control. We must stand firm. We must insist on every one of the objectionable clauses in the Act being dropped completely before we will work under the Act, or insist on a new Act without any such clauses being brought forward.

The B.M.A. has done well, but only at the last. Much more publicity and information should be given at public meetings in the towns and in the Press. "Only be strong and very courageous." We must act with persevering courage and confidence. We have the power, and if we use it now to throw out this infamous and un-English Act we shall have struck a major blow for freedom. We shall have begun to win back liberty not only for ourselves but for every man, woman, and child in England.—I am, etc.,

Winchester.

SYBIL TREMELLEN.

Medicine and the Ministry of Food

SIR,—As a pathologist I was very interested to read in the *Journal* of Jan. 11 (p. 69) that the advisers of the Ministry of Food had furnished Dr. H. Foxell with the following information: "Our advisers are of the opinion the pernicious anaemia is completely controllable by modern therapy." It would seem, therefore, in view of this information, that I have discovered a new disease, rare enough I agree, which consists of a macrocytic anaemia associated with gastro-intestinal disturbance, subacute combined degeneration of the spinal cord, and the bone marrow of an Addisonian type of pernicious anaemia, which gives little or no response to liver or any other form of modern therapy.

During the past few weeks I have spent some time reading the current English, American, and Russian literature dealing with the relationship between protein deficiency, in particular deficiency in amino-acids, and macrocytic anaemias in general. Perhaps I have been wasting my time and should await further bulletins from the Ministry of Food.—I am, etc.,

Southport, Lancs.

JOHN H. HANNAN.

The Plebiscite

SIR,—At a meeting of the West Sussex Division of the B.M.A. on Jan. 12, I was amazed at the confusion which exists among doctors about the plebiscite. Many, like myself, had voted "Yes" and were not at all clear whether this implied approval of the Act as it stands or approval of negotiation. To my mind the plebiscite has tended rather to confuse the issue and has divided the profession into three, and not two, groups: (a) those in favour of the Act as it stands; (b) those against the Act as it stands, but in favour of negotiation; (c) those against the Act and against negotiation on it. There is no means of telling what proportion of those voting "Yes" fall into group (b), and my impression from this meeting was that this proportion was high. It is important for the Minister and the profession to know this proportion as it will profoundly influence what action each should take.

The Minister and the profession are each endeavouring to create a comprehensive medical service which will be in the best interests of the public. It does seem a great pity that all negotiation between them should cease. What the profession has expressed is not a refusal to negotiate but a refusal to negotiate on the Minister's closed terms—the Act as it stands. In his latest letter Mr. Bevan has adopted a more conciliatory tone, but can still only negotiate within the terms of the Act. The percentages in the plebiscite show that it is the general practitioners who need to be conciliated. May I suggest to the Minister that the most thorny point remaining would appear to be the goodwill of their practices. If the Minister is sincere about the points he has raised in his letter, including appeal from the decision of the tribunal, then it should be possible to reach a compromise.—I am, etc.,

Chichester, Sussex.

JOHN D. WHITESIDE.

SIR,—The voting in the recent plebiscite indicates that the majority of doctors under 40 are in favour of negotiations, while a majority of those over 40 are against. It would be interesting to know what proportion of delegates at the forthcoming Special Representative Meeting belong to each of those age groups. The discrepancy between the result of this vote, with its narrow majority in favour of suspending negotiations, and the overwhelming majority vote against the main principles of the Act at the last Representative Meeting needs some explaining. I believe that the older age group is in a large majority at those local meetings where the representatives are elected. I cannot think of any other explanation.

Recent experience has shown that to get us anywhere we need a 90% backing of our members. We have not got this backing in this matter, and I believe that this small majority vote does not warrant the suggested action of Council, which will only succeed in splitting the profession and will get us nowhere.—I am, etc.,

Nelson, Lancs.

T. D. CULBERT.

SIR,—Most of my medical service has been performed abroad where I have learnt to appreciate virtues other than British, but such racial pride as I possess is founded on my kinship with the millions of sturdy men and women who have made us what we are, with the "village Hampdens" as well as with the Cranmers and Cromwells, Miltons and Bunyans, Wesleys and Wilberforces of British history. Can we not then consider the subject of the plebiscite purely from its ethical aspect? Is this Act such as our fathers would have laid down their lives for? Surely it hasn't come to this, that we must ask how others will vote or act before we decide to stand by or reject principles? What has the crowd to do with my conscience?

Let us have unity by all means, if we can win men to forget self and serve only the best. Men may accuse us as they like, but, as many of us see it, we face a crisis in our national