

### Ethics of Government's Advisers

SIR.—Examples of interference at a distance with the general practitioner's recommendations regarding the diet of his patients have been published from time to time in the medical and lay Press. We have been assured by Government spokesmen that lay interference—i.e., refusal to grant extra items of diet by the local food office staff—may be overcome by reference of individual cases to the Ministry, when each case will be examined by the Government's panel of medical experts, whose decision, again taken at a distance, is apparently irrevocable. It has also been pointed out that interference from a distance occurs in the provision of surgical corsets. Here the Board of Trade is the culprit in the first instance, and certain medical advisers of the Ministry of Health or the Department of Health for Scotland in the second.

Now it is a generally accepted ethical principle in our profession that we do not give opinions on other practitioners' cases unless we are invited to do so, and then only after examining the patient. It would appear, therefore, that there is a *prima facie* case against these medical experts or advisers, whatever they call themselves, of unprofessional conduct. Unless of course the changing face of Britain, with emphasis on the encouragement of dishonesty and immorality, has been accompanied by a corresponding change in the ethical standards so long and so rigidly upheld by the General Medical Council.—I am, etc.,

Denham, Bucks.

EUSTACE SHIPMAN.

### POINTS FROM LETTERS

#### Wrong Use of Power

Dr. ELSIE M. CHUBB (Capetown) writes: "I was much impressed at the stencilled copies sent out during the ban on the weekly Press, and was rather surprised at the lack of initiative shown by so many others who merely accepted it. The appearing of the truncated *B.M.J.* was a very valuable protest against wrong use of power by the Government.

#### William Blake Psychologized

Dr. E. WEATHERHEAD (Southborough, Kent) writes: I suggest that if poor Blake is to be "psychologized" he should also be "physiologized" and "pathologized." Had he lived in these days he would certainly have been "hospitalized." . . .

#### A Demobilized Doctor

"M.D." writes: Anticipating the happy occasion next year of the jubilee of the R.A.M.C., may one suggest an additional small function for that body and its R.N. and R.A.F. counterparts? The very worthy appeal on behalf of needful families of deceased members and ex-members with which you deal in your current number may, I think, be supplemented by one—not definitely of monetary aspect—on behalf of the ex-members themselves. It is one for a little help and advice to those of them who meet with difficulties in their search for civilian occupation after demobilization. A case in point is that of a man of 35 who, after his long service, mostly abroad, did his hospital course and then got ill. General practice is barred because of poor health, but research work is avidly sought for by this earnest worker. He has failed to obtain such employment after many inquiries. Perhaps he is on the wrong line, and possibly one of your kind readers could set him right.

#### Attempted Suicide

Dr. W. H. BRYCE (St. Andrews) writes: Referring to the article in the *Supplement* of May 17 (p. 103) on "The Law Relating to Attempted Suicide," it may be of interest to know that in Scots law attempted suicide is not a crime *per se*.

#### Experiments on Human Beings

MESSRS. L. G. TRIDGELL, P. SAUNDERS, and H. GARLING (London, S.E.22) write: Lest Dr. Louise Fraser's letter published in your issue of May 31, p. 785, should lead others to assume that all experiments on human beings are unethical may we, as three of some forty conscientious objectors who took part in several experiments for periods up to five years, state that we were under no sort of external compulsion to participate; nor, having started, were we compelled to continue any longer than we thought fit. We have as yet insufficient experience of what happens in jail.

## Obituary

### NOAH MORRIS, M.D., F.R.C.P.

Noah Morris, Regius Professor of Materia Medica at Glasgow University since 1937, died in Glasgow on June 1 at the early age of 53. By his untimely death the Glasgow medical school has lost one of its outstanding personalities at the height of his achievements. A native of Glasgow, Prof. Morris graduated B.Sc. with special distinction in physiology in 1913, M.B., Ch.B. with honours in 1915, and for his M.D. thesis in 1921 he was awarded the Bellahouston Gold Medal. He also held the degree of D.Sc. and the D.P.H. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London in 1943, and had been a Fellow of the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow since 1921.

Morris had been interested in physiology and biochemistry since his early days, and after a period as assistant and later demonstrator in the department of physiology, under the late Prof. D. Noël Paton, he was appointed professor of physiology in the Anderson College of Medicine, while at the same time carrying on a general practice. In 1928 he was offered, and accepted, the newly created University lectureship in pathological biochemistry, with which was combined the post of biochemist to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Glasgow. Here he laid the foundations of his reputation as a teacher and investigator. He published many papers on metabolic problems, particularly with reference to disturbance in acid-base balance and the metabolism of calcium, phosphorus, and fat. He frequently read communications to the meetings of the Association of Physicians and the British Paediatric Association, and at the same time he inspired much of the research done by the other members of the hospital staff.

Prof. Ralph Stockman, who died at the age of 85 only last year, had been appointed to the chair of materia medica in 1897. He resigned in 1936, and Dr. Morris succeeded him as the Regius Professor of Materia Medica. In the years which have elapsed since then he has more than maintained the high traditions of the chair. This appointment also carried with it the post of physician in charge of medical wards at Stobhill General Hospital—an innovation at the time but one which rapidly proved itself. Gathering about him a band of young and enthusiastic workers, Morris built up a department which soon became noted for the high standard of its teaching and for the vigorous research which went on under his leadership. Not content with this, Morris also achieved a high reputation as an administrator, and during the past two years his onerous duties as convener of the Committee of Postgraduate Medical Education were undertaken with his customary energy and enthusiasm. Indeed it is only a few short weeks since he ceased work. Following an operation, his health seemed to improve, but the nature of his illness meant that his days were numbered, a fact which he faced with admirable courage.

As a colleague, Morris was characterized by his loyalty to his friends, his sound judgment, and his honesty of purpose. Although accustomed to speak his mind freely, he had few, if any, enemies, and as a regular attendant at medical meetings he would always be found the centre of a jovial group discussing the events of the day. He was widely read and well-informed and the pleasure he got from these talks was more than equalled by the pleasure he gave to others. He was respected and loved by undergraduates. Not only was he a clear and forcible lecturer but he had a great sense of humour, which students were quick to appreciate.

Morris's life was cut short at a tragically early stage and we mourn his loss. He lived his life to the full and he died as one would have expected—courageously and without complaint. We extend our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Morris, who shared with him his enthusiasm and was proud of the success he had achieved, and to his son and daughter.

Sir Alexander Macgregor writes: I trust you will allow me to pay a tribute to the memory of the late Prof. Morris, my old friend and adviser in municipal hospital affairs. His dual appointment to the university chair of materia medica and as a physician to Stobhill Hospital was a happy event in the