

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Public Health Committee of the Association was held on February 19, with Dr. H. K. Cowan in the chair. It was reported that the evidence to be submitted on behalf of the Association to the Working Party on Health Visitors, the preparation of which had been the responsibility of a Joint Subcommittee of the Public Health, General Medical Services, and Central Consultants and Specialists Committees, had been completed and would be submitted to the parent committees at their next meetings, with a view to approval by the Council on May 5.

Remuneration

The Committee received a report that only three authorities have not yet implemented Industrial Court Awards Nos. 2285 and 2321. With reference to the recent Award to assistant medical officers (No. 2452) all local health authorities, with one exception, have accepted and are implementing the Award. The position in County Down in connexion with the remuneration of divisional medical officers had been the subject of a special report to the Ministry of Health and Local Government, Northern Ireland. This report was discussed by the Committee and the view was expressed that the advice given by the independent investigator was acceptable to the Committee subject to clarification on two points. It was agreed that an assurance should be sought from the Ministry and that if satisfactory the Council be recommended to concur with the advice set out in the report, which it was understood had been accepted by the Ministry.

Appeals Machinery in Northern Ireland

What was described as a step forward was contained in a letter from the Ministry of Health and Local Government, Northern Ireland, with regard to appeals machinery in Northern Ireland. A liaison committee representing the various interests in the health services found that in the absence of formal Whitley machinery for the health services in Northern Ireland it would be difficult for an appeals arrangement to be fashioned on the British model, yet benefit might be derived from the formation, where appropriate, of *ad hoc* committees consisting of representatives of the employing authority and of the professional association or trade union of the employee. The Minister appreciated the value of *ad hoc* committees in seeking to resolve disputes, but pointed out their limitations. Further consideration must be given to the point that if an *ad hoc* committee failed to agree there was no provision for further appeal save by recourse to the general machinery for the settlement of industrial disputes.

The Public Health Committee was reminded that the suggestions for the constitution of *ad hoc* committees had been put forward by the Association last year when a deputation led by the chairman had discussed the matter with the Minister of Health. It was felt that progress was being made but that details of the arrangements would need to be discussed further.

Public Health Representation on Regional Hospital Boards

An analysis was placed before the Committee of the medical membership of regional hospital boards in England and Wales. The total number of members of the boards is 379, and, of these, 115 are medical members, but include only three members of the public health services. It was felt that medical officers of health could give valuable assistance and advice to boards, and it was agreed to ask the Council to include in the list of doctors recommended for appointment to regional hospital boards and boards of governors the names of suitable members of the public health service.

"Added Years"

It was reported that as a result of representations made by the Association the Minister of Housing and Local Government had decided that the medical and nursing staff of local authorities (who had hitherto been excluded) should have the benefit of the "added years" regulation. This regulation (No. 12 of the Draft Local Government Superannuation (Benefits) Regulations) lays it down that where, for the efficient discharge of his duties, a contributory employee is required to possess professional or other qualifications which he has not acquired during employment with a local authority, he may request the authority to direct that a number of years be added to his service, and he will be entitled to reckon that number of additional years as contributing service.

Conference on Venereal Disease

The Venereologists Group Committee had represented to the chairman of the Public Health Committee the increasing difficulty in the follow-up of venereal cases and more particularly the tracing of contacts, and had suggested that it might be useful to call a conference of venereologists to which medical officers of health also might be invited.

The chairman reported that during the informal discussions held between representatives of the two committees it had been agreed to recommend that such a conference should be held in the form of a joint meeting of the Public Health and Venereologists Group Committees and that the Society of Medical Officers of Health and the Medical Society for the Study of Venereal Diseases be invited to send representatives. The Committee accepted the recommendation and provisional arrangements were made for the conference to be held in March.

Meat Production and Control

It was reported that the British Veterinary Association had submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Agriculture in which it had suggested that the veterinary profession should be responsible for the supervisory control of meat inspection and that local authority meat inspection functions should be transferred to the Ministry's animal health service. An important implication of the plan was that medical supervision through the medical officer of health over meat inspection would be removed.

Regret was expressed that the British Veterinary Association had not seen fit to inform the British Medical Association of its intended action through the Joint Committee of the two bodies, which had already discussed the matter. After detailed discussion it was agreed that the principle of medical supervision was vital, especially bearing in mind the relationship between meat inspection and the prevention and control of human disease. It was understood that the Council of the Society of Medical Officers of Health felt strongly on this matter, and it was agreed that the Society of Medical Officers of Health be asked to join with the Committee in preparing a memorandum setting out the views of the profession to be submitted to the appropriate Government department.

Other Matters

Other matters under discussion included the occupational resettlement of tuberculous persons, vaccination, and institutional accommodation for mental patients.

At the conclusion of the Public Health Committee a formal meeting of the Trustees of the Public Health Service Defence Trust was held.

Correction.—In the report of the Ophthalmic Group Committee meeting (*Supplement*, February 27, p. 55), under the heading "Treatment of Cataract and Glaucoma," the quotation from a Ministry circular, "early diagnosis [of glaucoma] appears to be all too frequent . . .," should have read, ". . . appears to be all too infrequent."