

Correspondence

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Area Health Boards

SIR,—In the review of the book *A Unified Health Service*, by Dr. D. Owen (21 September, p. 731), your reviewer rejects the suggestion that area health boards should contain a majority of representatives drawn from local authorities. He states that "boards dominated by the local authorities would be as unacceptable to the profession today [as it was in the Bevan reorganization of 1948] for the very good reason that party politics dominate local government." This argument is, of course, coloured by whether one agrees with the particular party politics of the moment. However, be that as it may, one wonders where your reviewer gets the idea that the medical profession is still of this view now, 20 years later.

My impression is that neither hospital medical staff nor the general practitioners are happy with the monolithic structure which we have today—remote, inaccessible, and

impersonal as it is. The old county council hospitals had their faults, but at least the local public and the medical profession knew who was running them. Surely the solution should be an amalgam of the two systems—that is to say, some central administrative direction, but with strong locally elected participation in management.

Since 1943 (the Ernest Brown Plan¹) a whole new generation of doctors has grown up, and it would be most unfortunate if the planners of today were to act on the assumption that they were all still of the same view as their fathers were a quarter of a century ago.—I am, etc.,

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REFERENCE

- ¹ *A National Health Service*, Cmnd. 6502, 1944. H.M.S.O., London. See also *Brit. med. J.*, Suppl., 1944, 1, 31.

Arthritis and Mycoplasmal Pneumonia

SIR,—Dr. H. P. Lambert (20 July, p. 156) has described a syndrome of acute arthritis in man associated with pneumonia due to *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*. In this laboratory we have recently become interested in evaluating naturally occurring arthritides in animals as potential pharmacological models for the assessment of anti-inflammatory drugs.

According to Penny, Osborne, and Wright,¹ limb lesions occur in 65% of pigs of bacon weight. Chronic arthritis is frequently the cause of these lesions, although claw and hoof lesions of a traumatic nature are also common causes of lameness. We have examined a number of cases of arthritis in swine. So-called virus pneumonia, frequently due to mycoplasmata, preceded the joint lesions in a high proportion of cases. Penny *et al.* point out the high incidence of the syndrome of pleurisy, pericarditis, and peri-

tonitis seen in bacon and abattoir carcasses, and suggest that the sterile chronic arthritis may be a sequel to infection with mycoplasmata or other organisms. This condition, known as Glässer's disease in Europe,² was shown to be due to mycoplasma by Lecce,³ and Roberts, Switzer, and Ramsey.⁴ However, these cases differ both from the syndrome described by Lambert and our own cases in that the lesions do not affect the parenchymatous organs, apart from the occasional extension of lymphocytic exudate into the subpleural alveoli and Glisson's capsule of the liver. In our cases there was clear evidence of resolving pneumonia of a type characteristic of mycoplasmal infection,⁵ and from which the organisms could be isolated. The hilar lymph nodes were very much enlarged and hyperaemic. There was organizing pericarditis and pleural adhesions in some

cases, and in a few the subphrenic spaces were obliterated by adhesions. The joints showed arthritis of varying degrees of acuteness but were usually hyperaemic, with an increase of polymorph-laden fluid, and inflammatory cells in the hypertrophic synovium.

Further detailed studies now in progress will be reported later, but I wish to draw the attention of your readers interested in arthritis that syndromes similar to those described by Lambert in man are probably of frequent occurrence in domestic animals (calves, lambs, and swine). That occurring in swine is particularly well defined and readily accessible. In view of the increasing use of the pig as an experimental animal, it may prove to be a valuable system for experimental pathological and pharmacological studies.—I am, etc.,

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- ² Glässer, K., Hupka, E., and Wetzel, R., *Die Krankheiten des Schweines*, 1961, 6th ed., Hannover.
- ³ Lecce, J. G., *Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci.*, 1960, **79**, 670.
- ⁴ Roberts, E. D., Switzer, W. P., and Ramsey, F. K., *Amer. J. Vet. Res.*, 1963, **24**, 19.
- ⁵ Smith, H. A., and Jones, T. C., *Veterinary Pathology*, 3rd ed., 1967. London.

Poisons in the Home

SIR,—I think that I should draw Dr. Cyril Hart's (5 October, p. 52) attention to the fact that the B.M.A. has been dealing with this problem since 1967,¹ when the Committee on Medical Science, Education and Research, with Mr. A. Lawrence Abel in the chair, discussed the following resolution which had been moved at the Annual Representative Meeting, 1967: "That the Representative Body adopt as a matter of policy the principle that all preparations and substances