

Consultants Protest at Delay in Contract Negotiations

The senior hospital doctors in the Owen Working Party on consultants' contracts have written to Dr. David Owen protesting strongly about the delay in meetings since they were given approval to continue discussions by central meetings of hospital doctors (14 December, p. 668). Dr. Owen had postponed a meeting fixed for 12 December until 20 December. He gave as the reason the need to discuss with his Government colleagues the resolutions of 5 December from the Central Committee for Hospital Medical Services of the B.M.A. and the Council of the Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association. Both associations, the letter says, regard two basic principles as essential for the maintenance of medicine and dentistry as independent professions:

(1) that consultants' remuneration from the National Health Service must be based solely on work done for the National Health Service; and

(2) that outside the time consultants have contracted to undertake N.H.S. work they must be free to engage in other work as they see fit.

"The letter," said the B.M.A. in a press

statement, "reflects consultants' anger at a delay of yet another week and calls for a full statement of the Government's position at this next meeting. The consultants have warned the Government that if it is unable to accept their two basic principles they believe further discussions will be impossible."

Working to Contract

As the *B.M.J.* went to press, early because of the Christmas printing schedule, there were reports that in the Blackburn area of Lancashire consultants had started to work to contract.

In a letter dated 17 December to H.C.S.A. members, Mr. T. R. Beatson, President, warned that unless there was "a complete change of heart by Dr. Owen and the Department by the end of this week the Executive Committee will recommend to Council at a special meeting on Saturday, that sanctions be applied from Monday, 23 December. A final decision will be relayed to you over the weekend."

Juniors Write to Minister

After the meeting of the Executive of the Hospital Junior Staffs Group Council held in Glasgow on 17 December the Chairman of the H.J.S. Group Council, Dr. R. A. G. Brown, wrote to Mrs. Barbara Castle, Secretary of State, about the negotiations for a new contract for junior hospital doctors. The letter is published here.

"At a meeting of the Junior Hospital Staffs Contract Working Party on 11 September the junior hospital doctors' representatives reached an agreement with your officials in the presence of a consultant observer that with effect from 1 July 1975 a standard 40-hour working week should be introduced instead of an 80-hour week which is at present the case.

"To our surprise the minutes of that meeting, written by the Department of Health and Social Security officials, do not record this agreement. Since then your officials have denied that any such agreement was reached, we regard this retraction as deplorable, and we have to tell you that

your officials no longer enjoy our confidence in negotiation.

"We believe that this agreement should be honoured. We are therefore writing to ask you to meet us to discuss this matter within the next two weeks. In the meantime, in view of the serious state of the contract negotiations for both senior and junior hospital doctors, we are consulting with the Central Committee for Hospital Medical Services to decide what joint sanctions may be appropriate in the event of a breakdown in our joint negotiations with you."

Increased Mileage Allowance

Agreement has been reached between the Whitley Councils (staff side) and the Department of Health for increased mileage allowances, operative from 18 November

1974. They are: cars with an engine capacity of 501-1,000 cc (including the Fiat 500), 6.2p per mile; 1,001-1,750 cc, 7.4p per mile; cars over 1,750 cc, 8.1p per mile. The mileage allowance for part-time work (20 July, p. 200) has automatically been increased, using the range quoted above for cars of 1,001-1,750 cc. The new rate of 7.4p will cover part-time work for Government departments, police authorities, and N.H.S. authorities.

Cost of Living Payments for N.H.S. Doctors

The agreement between the Health Departments and the profession's representatives on payments under threshold arrangements, defined in phase 3 of the pay code and as recommended in the *Fourth Report of the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration*, ended on 15 November. The first payment was £1.20 per week for doctors working full-time in the N.H.S. (27 July, p. 292). The final payment brought the total to £3.60 per week. The table published here gives the dates of the interim increases.

	Increase per week £	Total payment £
21 June	0.80	2.00
19 July	0.40	2.40
16 August	0.40	2.80
20 September	Nil	2.80
18 October	0.40	3.20
15 November	0.40	3.60

B.M.A. Annual Meetings

The B.M.A.'s Annual Representative and Scientific Meetings will be held in Leeds from 7 to 11 July 1975. A Joint Clinical Meeting with the Danish Medical Association will be held at Scanticon, near Aarhus, Denmark, from 25 to 28 September.

Provisional Dates for 1976

The provisional dates for annual meetings during 1976 are: Annual Clinical Meeting, Exeter, 8-10 April; Joint B.M.A./C.M.A./I.M.A. Clinical Meeting, Dublin, 27 June-2 July; and the Annual Representative Meeting, London, 12-16 July (the A.R.M. will include craft conferences).

Association Notices

Diary of Central Meetings

JANUARY

2 Thurs. Rural Practice Working Group (G.M.S.), 2 p.m.
9 Thurs. General Purposes Subcommittee (G.M.S.), 10.30 a.m.
15 Wed. Finance Committee, 2 p.m.
15 Wed. Hospitals Subcommittee (G.M.S.), 2 p.m.

15 Wed. Statutes and Regulations Subcommittee (G.M.S.), 2.30 p.m.
16 Thurs. General Medical Services Committee, 10 a.m.
16 Thurs. Organization Committee, 11 a.m.
22 Wed. Council, 10 a.m.
23 Thurs. General Medical Services Committee (Wales), (at Hotel Commodore, Llandrindod Wells), 2.15 p.m.
27 Mon. Panel on Gaps in Medical Research (Board of Science and Education), 2.15 p.m.