Michael Meacher, called the Bill a miscellaneous rag bag. On the removal of the opticians’ monopoly he said that the proposed free market traders in spectacles would be neither qualified nor accountable to the professional bodies. As to the proposal to establish family practitioner committees as health authorities in their own right, it flew in the face of recent health service planning to integrate hospital and primary health care. Mr Meacher also criticised the proposal that the Secretary of State should appoint not just the chairman but all 30 members of family practitioner committees. He foresaw a comprehensive centralisation of power being imposed on the NHS.

Dr Brian Mawhinney said that he did not fear the direct link between family practitioner committees and the Secretary of State. There had been insufficient accountability in the past. The Minister for Health, Mr Kenneth Clarke, told the House that the appointment to family practitioner committees would be made from names put forward by the profession, local authorities, health authorities, and other bodies that would be consulted. A joint working party had been set up between health authorities and family practitioner committees to advise on how to improve collaboration between the different parts of the service. When the group had reported guidelines would be issued. He hoped that the new family practitioner committees on the joint consultative committees, get involved in joint planning with health authorities and local authorities, and try to make them effective and responsive bodies that will play their part in a properly coordinated service."

MEDICAL NEWS

The Nuffield Foundation pharmacy inquiry

The trustees of the Nuffield Foundation have set up a committee of inquiry to consider the present and future structure of the practice of pharmacy in its several branches and its potential contribution to health care, and to review the education and training of pharmacists accordingly. The committee would like to receive written information and views from interested individuals and organisations both inside and outside the profession. It would be especially interested to hear of experiments and innovations in aspects of pharmacy practice. If possible it would like to receive the evidence by 30 April. Details about the inquiry and the specific issues about which the committee would like information may be obtained from the secretary of the pharmacy inquiry, Nuffield Foundation, Nuffield Lodge, Regent’s Park, London NW1 4RS.

Health Advisory Service reports to be published

The government has decided recently that reports of the Health Advisory Service, the independent body that looks at hospitals and services for mentally ill and elderly people, should be made public. In the past these reports have always been confidential. The Minister of Health said, "We believe that everyone interested in these reports should be able to understand the difficulties of health care could be helped by more openness about the advice we receive. . . Publication of reports should help to promote wider understanding of the achievements and the problems of these services."

Flosint suspended

The product licence for Flosint tablets (indoprofen) has been suspended by the United Kingdom health ministers. The company (Farmitalia Carlo Erba Ltd) has made available to the licensing authority the results of postmarketing surveillance of UK patients, which give cause for concern about a series of toxic effects of the drug, particularly gastrointestinal effects. The Committee on Safety of Medicines has received 217 reports of adverse reactions associated with Flosint including seven cases in which the patients died. The pattern of these reports reinforces the concern arising from the postmarketing study. Doctors are advised neither to start any new patients on the drug nor to prescribe the drug without good reason. Pharmacists are advised to contact the prescribing doctor about any prescriptions they receive for the drug. Patients using Flosint tablets at present should consult their doctor.

Health Ombudsman’s latest report

The Health Service Ombudsman’s third report has recently been published. It refers to a selection of 24 reports taken from a total of 41 cases on which full investigations were completed during the period April-September 1983. The ombudsman found no justification for complaint in 31 of these. Copies of the report may be obtained from HMSO price £9.95.

COMING EVENTS

Cardiff Royal Infirmary—Dinner to celebrate the opening of the foundation of the infirmary on its present site, 9 February, Cardiff. Details from the unit administrator, 2nd floor, Cardiff CF2 1SZ. (Tel 0222 492233, ext 204 403.)

British Psychoanalytical Society—Course "Psychoanalytic treatment and recovery," 11 February, London. Details from the honorary secretary of the public lectures committee, Institute of Psychoanalysis, 63 New Cavendish Street, London W1M 7RD. (Tel 01 580 6952.)

Church Missionary Society—Meeting "Health care available for the sick," 22 February, London. Details from the society, 157 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UU.

Women in Medicine—Annual conference open to any physician in health care, 31 March, Newcastle upon Tyne. Details from WIM Conference, 78 Fenham Hall Drive, Newcastle upon Tyne.

"Spinal disorders 1984"—International course, 24-29 June, Gothenburg. Details from Dr Alf Nachenmosen, Department of Neurology, University Hospital, 2020 1 Sahlgrens Hospital, S 413 45 Gothenburg, Sweden.

"Applications of perinatal epidemiology"—Course and workshop, 4-8 August, Oxford. Details from Dr P Kayser, Institute of Medical Statistics, Oxford.

South Essex Postgraduate Medical Centre—Details and copies of the January programme are available from the centre, Basildon Hospital, Nether Road, Basildon, Essex. (Tel 0206 391 311.)

Food Group of the Society of Chemical Industry—Details and copies of the consolidated programme of meetings of the food group are available from the secretary, Mrs R O Hunt, 19 Warington Road, Herne Hill, London SE24 9LA. (Tel 01-777 0179.)