Book reviews

Absenteeism in Industry. By Stanley F. Yolles, Pasquale A. Carone, and Leonard W. Krinsky. (Pp. 141; \$11.50). Springfield, Illinois: Thomas. 1975.

The title page of this book gives no indication that it is actually a full transcript of a two-day conference on absenteeism held in 1973. The conference was sponsored jointly by the South Oaks Federation and the Department of Psychiatry of the State University of New York with 58 participants drawn from a wide range of backgrounds. Each of its seven chapters begins with an introductory paper followed by a lengthy and largely unstructured discussion which rarely keeps to that aspect of absenteeism considered in the paper. The main contributions consider the subject from differing viewpoints: industrial psychology, line and personnel management, trades union, general practice, and psychiatry. The final session was opened by Dr Steinfeld who had recently been Surgeon General of the United States: his paper was the only one to contain any facts and figures and these were derived from the National Health Survey in 1971.

The subject of absenteeism can often generate dogmatic assertions among those who take part in such meetings, and this symposium was no exception. Some of the conflicts clearly arose because participants were not agreed on just what was meant by the word absenteeism. Some clearly considered that the meeting was concerned with wilful absence from work (malingering), others with absence caused by or attributed to illness and injury, or by the abuse of alcohol and other drugs. Most however seemed to agree that attendance at work was largely determined by motivation even if they differed on ways to improve it. Two themes run through the book, the recent but fundamental changes that have occurred in attitudes of workers towards their jobs and the important role of alcohol and drug abuse in the causation of frequent absences from work. Although this book contains much that will interest managers and doctors in industry, it contains nothing really new. It has neither references nor a bibliography and little factual information is provided to support the opinions put forward by the participants. While I found some of the main papers in this book both clear and interesting, most of the discussion sections which fill more than half the pages were tedious, repetitive, and added little of substance.

P. J. TAYLOR

Cadmium in the Environment, 2nd edition. By L. Friberg, M. Piscator, G. F. Nordberg, and T. Kjellström. (Pp. 260; \$29.95). CRC Press. 1974.

The authors of this book are all members of the Department of Environmental Hygiene at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm and their names have been appearing in the literature on cadmium for many years.

This is not a textbook in the normal meaning but consists of a summary of all papers written on cadmium with appropriate comments and criticism. The chapters are well selected and include cadmium occurrence, possible route of exposure and daily intake, cadmium metabolism, respiratory effects, and dose-response relationships—problems which are of great interest to the specialist in occupational health. Interspersed with the summaries are sections on problems of analysis which are extremely practical and give reasons for using various methods under different circumstances. There are important discussions on the value of cadmium estimations in blood and the relevance of cadmium in urine estimations. This is a complete and detailed survey of all relevant literature in the cadmium story but one chapter is devoted to a study of the health effects of cadmium in the general environment in Japan. This is mainly a study of *htai-htai* disease which has never been completely documented and the authors have collected all the Japanese studies and discussed and criticized their findings. The conclusions they draw are particularly interesting in the light of the high rate of calcium excretion which is found in cadmium workers and the osteomalacia found in Japan contrasts rather strangely with the rarity of bone effects seen in people exposed to cadmium in this country. The influence of diet and vitamin D on the *htai-htai* syndrome demonstrates the need for the use of very precise epidemiological evidence in investigations of the effects of pollution by heavy metals.

This book is essential reading for anyone interested in heavy metals and gives an immense amount of practical information to the epidemiologist interested in the effects of pollution.

H. HOLDEN

The Human Operator in Process Control. Edited by Elwyn Edwards and Frank P. Lees. (Pp. 480; £11.00). London: Taylor and Francis. 1974.