

time demonstrating how existing government and industrial records often leave us frustratingly short of what we really want to know.

A. T. WELFORD

**Digest of Statistics Analysing Certificates of Incapacity 1955/56.** (Pp. 177; multigraphed double-foolscap; 71 tables, 2 charts). London: Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance. 1958.

The digest of statistics produced for 1955/56 by the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance follows the usual pattern. The statistical year runs from June to June; and although this means that direct comparisons with mortality and other data for the calendar year are impossible, there is the epidemiological advantage that the experience in one winter can be readily compared with the next. The weekly time trends of sickness claims over the winters since 1948/49 make the value of such comparisons quite evident. More precise comparisons between 1955/56 and earlier years have been tabulated by standardizing the various annual claim rates on the basis of the age and sex distribution of the insured population in 1951. The standardized claim rates are set out by cause, for each sex separately, for the various causes of disability in the International List. These rates suggest a rather alarming increase in the frequency of conditions such as anxiety states from 0.5 to 1.3 per 1,000 between 1951 and 1955. These rises are, however, generally confined to chronic disabling conditions and are likely to be the result of the extension of the sickness insurance scheme to the whole population including the chronic sick.

New tables describe the number of individuals receiving benefit during the year according to the occupation as given by the claimant on his first claim for sickness benefit. The distribution of length of the spells of sickness absence for each of the main causes is also given for each occupational group. Unfortunately, in 1955, four years after the census, no accurate estimate of the population exposed to risk was readily available so that no rates by occupation could be computed. Industrial accidents are given for each industry, and a supplementary table sets out the number of individuals sustaining one, two, three, etc. accidents during the course of the year. For both accidents and prescribed diseases the total number of claims by men and women are given in each of the major industries. The remaining tables are substantially the same as in previous years.

As the preface to this publication makes clear, the information is intended for the use of medical and social research workers and administrators. To the physician practising in industry, its immediate interest and value is thus likely to be limited. On the other hand, the tabulations represent much information whose potential is too often underrated. That potential is unlikely to be realized until the problem of computing the exposure to risk is firmly tackled. At present only an estimate of the age and sex distribution of the whole insured population is given so that interpretation of the claim counts given in such detail for various occupational and regional groupings cannot be readily undertaken. The difficulties of providing population estimates for such

groupings, occupational or regional, are patent, but the Ministry should feel confident enough about the value of the material at their disposal to make the substantial investment in time and effort which such population estimates will require. Certainly, without age and sex specific claim rates, the value to research workers in occupational medicine of these annual reports is likely to remain rather limited.

D. D. REID

**Rehabilitation** [Vol. 5 of the Supplements of *Zbl. Arbeitsmed.*] By Hermann Münk. (Pp. 152; 25 figures, 29 diagrams. DM 20.-.) Darmstadt: Steinkopff Verlag. 1959.

The writer has divided this volume into sections, each of which is discussed by a specialist. He gives a review of work done in the Anglo-Saxon countries and then describes activities of this kind in Germany. There is an interesting chapter on the legal aspect of injury or sickness associated with working conditions. It is pointed out that, by more attention to prophylaxis and the quicker change of or modification of work, many who become a charge on sick and other funds would not need to do so. This seems to be particularly true of those who suffer from circulatory disorders. Methods have been introduced in the town of Ohlstadt in which such patients are put through a course of training which may well be described as athletic. It is considered essential that the doctor controlling this preventive treatment should himself take part in the course. Results hitherto seem very good indeed.

The orthopaedic appliances illustrated and described seem to be similar to those known in Great Britain, but side by side with this much attention is given to the psychiatric problems of injury, and the cooperation between the surgeon and the psychiatrist seems to be closer than with us.

Although not strictly rehabilitation work, much space is devoted to the design of machines, whether for use by well or handicapped personnel. With this, time and motion study goes hand in hand.

One contributor laments the increasing proportion of industrial workers in Germany who have had no special training, possess no special skill and thus, paradoxically, may sometimes learn new methods more easily than those who have been taught old ones. Some attention is given to seating and lighting.

A protest is made, very rightly, about too summary a classification of an injured person without detailed consideration of the activities which are not impossible, those which are more difficult, and those which are unaffected. This protest is most emphatic when head injuries are described, for it is with these that such a great variety of effects can occur and likewise with these that the psychiatric and organic injuries are so intermingled.

This book is well presented and, for its size, packed with very good material.

G. C. PETHER

**The Chemistry of Industrial Toxicology**, 2nd ed. By Hervey B. Elkins. (Pp. xi + 452; 26 figures. 92s.) New York: John Wiley and Sons; London: Chapman and Hall. 1959.