

to take part in the appointment of medical officers in industry, yet the method of appointment of members of the management—for the industrial medical officer is in this category—is a matter on which directors of firms must be consulted. Industry in this country is still largely run by private enterprise. It is no business of this JOURNAL to predict the future of industry but, whatever its structure may be, one paragraph in the report must always apply: 'It is necessary to dispose of the point of view that industry cannot afford a health service. Surely the opposite is the truth: industry cannot afford to be without a health service if efficiency and output are to be maintained.'

FACTORY INSPECTION AND MEDICAL SCIENCE

The Annual Report for 1943 of the Chief Inspector of Factories is a document of seventy pages of which seventeen are devoted to industrial medicine. Though this is undoubtedly an improvement on the four pages of 1940, there can be little doubt that Dr. E. R. A. Merewether, with unrivalled sources of information available, could fill the whole volume with matter of the greatest value to medical science. The medical branch of the Factory Department includes some of the most distinguished doctors in the field of occupational medicine, and in the past many of them have made contributions of great value to science, for example Dr. Merewether's own work on asbestosis¹; yet in the report no mention is made of the work of any of the medical inspectors, but they must have contributed to it in some form. The authoritative nature of the annual reports of hospitals such as Guy's and the Brompton can be compared with this brief document, containing no first-hand information, published by a government department with unique opportunities in an almost virgin field of medicine. The important facts relating to health collected by the Factory Department are of interest not only to works managers, personnel and labour managers, and the workers themselves, but are the urgent concern of doctors and scientists. So it is reasonable to suggest that in the future a separate medical report should be published each year and summarized in the Chief Inspector's Report.

On p. 21 the Chief Inspector refers to special investigations being carried out by his Department, and the first mentioned is luminizing. On p. 48 Dr. Merewether uses some of the scant space allotted to him to describe the results of the investigation, yet the amount of information he has been able to get into the space is valueless from a scientific point of view. There is neither a description of the conditions to which the workers were exposed, nor the clinical findings in those workers. Maybe the facts have been published elsewhere, but another striking feature of the report is that it is without references. We are told that as a result of the information, which is not published, further Orders have been made by the Minister of Labour. Doubt-

less these are necessary and correct, but it would be more democratic to publish the facts which show their necessity.

Early work on chronic benzene poisoning by Santesson² and Selling³ established the conception of a simple, constant clinical picture. This was an over-simplification based on insufficient human material. The work of Frank Hunter of Boston⁴ has made the problem of the relationship of leukaemia to benzene poisoning of the first importance. It is suggested in this report that a case occurred last year in England, yet no details are given of the exposure or the chemical findings; and no evidence is advanced that the man would not have died of leukaemia if he had never been exposed to benzene. Scarcity of human material may cause it to be many years before the relationship of benzene and leukaemia is fully understood, so that it would be a thousand pities if this case is not properly published forthwith.

The whole structure of medicine is at the present time in the melting pot and many reforms are necessary; but in this process all branches of medical thought are agreed that the freedom to publish scientific information must be ensured. It therefore follows that this freedom must be allowed to all medical inspectors and particularly to the senior medical inspector who prepares a report with such a wide circulation. Further, security must not be used in a rigid manner to prevent the dissemination of scientific knowledge; where it is truly involved we all agree that nothing should be published which might conceivably give useful information to the enemy. But now that the Ministry of Supply have published in a restricted form a paper on the early effects of exposure to trinitrotoluene,⁵ many will have had an opportunity of judging whether security can be considered a true reason for postponing the publication of this excellent piece of work.

METHYL BROMIDE

Methyl bromide is used in the chemical industry in the preparation of methyl compounds and for making colours from methylated tar. It has been extensively used in recent years as a fire-extinguisher, a refrigerant, a fumigant, and a delousing agent. It is an insecticide of great effectiveness and is capable of protecting a wide variety of foods, grain, plants and textiles. Entomologists favour its use in pest control because it leaves no smell or taste behind it, it is not explosive on mixture with air, it is highly toxic to insects in all stages of their development, it has a low absorption and high penetrating power, and is inexpensive. It is particularly effective in the extermination of lice, bed-bugs, and weevils.

It is a colourless, odourless gas at ordinary temperatures and pressures and is approximately three and a half times as heavy as air. As so often

² *Arch. Hyg.*, 1892, 31, 336.

³ *Bull. Johns Hopk. Hosp.*, 1910, 21, 33; and *Johns Hopk. Hosp. Rep.*, 1916, 17, 83.

⁴ *J. industr. Hyg.*, 1939, 21, 331.

⁵ Higgins, G., O'Brien, J. R. P., Stewart, Alice and Witts, L. J. (1944). H.M.S.O. Lond.

¹ *Effects of Asbestos Dust on the Lungs and Dust Suppression in the Asbestos Industry*, 1930. H.M.S.O. Lond.; and *Tubercle*, 1933, 15, 69, 109, 152.