Book reviews

Health Aspects of Environmental Pollution Control: Planning and Implementation of National Programmes. Technical Report Series 554. (Pp. 57; Price: Sw. fr. 6). Geneva: WHO. 1974.

This report was produced by a World Health Organization Expert Committee whose aims were 'to lay down general principles for the prevention and abatement of pollution, to delineate the functions of health authorities in this field, and to provide guidelines for the control of adverse effects of pollutants on man's health and well-being'. After a general statement of the problem and a discussion of present practices in pollution control the report goes on to discuss policy formation. In later sections technical and organizational aspects of control programmes and international collaboration are discussed, and the final section deals with conclusions and recommendations.

The following points are made in the report—environmental pollution is a complex subject and its scientific investigation requires a multidisciplinary approach; the development of effective pollution control programmes depends upon collaboration between public authorities, industry, and the public, and between politicians, scientists, and administrators. At the national level, health aspects of pollution control should be given high priority, and public health authorities should have a key role in the development and implementation of control programmes. In particular, there is a need for adequate financial support and a supply of competent manpower. Risk/benefit, cost/benefit, and cost/effectiveness studies are difficult to carry out, but they are an essential preliminary to wise policy decisions. Policies should be forward-looking and aim where possible at the prevention of pollution. At a technical level, pollution control depends upon suitable monitoring of pollutant sources and of pollutant levels in the environment. Much work needs to be done on the health effects of low levels of pollutants especially where there is long-term exposure. Pollution of the environment often has consequences that cut across national frontiers—for example, pollutants in the air and in rivers. International organizations such as WHO have an important role to play in pollution control and in promoting exchange of information, co-ordinating research, and determining standard practices.

At times the report makes heavy reading, but overall it does provide a useful statement of principles and recommended practices for pollution control which should be of value to politicians, scientists, and administrators concerned with the problem.

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Industry and Tropical Health VIII. Proceedings of the 8th Conference. Industrial Council for Tropical Health. Sponsored by the Harvard School of Public Health 3-5 April 1973, in Boston. (Pp. 198; \$15) Published for the Industrial Council for Tropical Health by the Harvard School of Public Health, Boston. 1974.

The first Conference of Industry and Tropical Health was held in 1950, and the eighth, the subject of this volume, in April 1973. It was attended by 97 delegates representing 50 industries and government bureaux. Twenty-two papers were delivered during six sessions, including some topics pertinent to environmental conditions other than tropical, ranging from hazards of living and working in the Arctic to the health risks associated with oil drilling operations over the floor of the North Sea. The papers can be divided into four main groups.

The first group of four papers deal with the development of health services in the developing countries. Dr Hughes outlines the role of private industry in providing health care in developing countries, and advocates that there should be a shift away from the paternal attitude to a locally orientated service, and also from personal curative medicine to environmental sanitation, industrial hygiene and other preventive aspects of occupational health, with the aim of getting the maximum benefit to the largest number of people. Dr Wood discusses his experience in developing co-operative health services in Tanzania, and comes to nearly the same conclusions.

The eleven papers in the second group deal with communicable diseases and environmental hazards. Three papers review the epidemics of Shiga dysentery in 1969 in Central America, the pandemic of cholera in 1973, and dengue fever in Colombia in 1971. Such epidemics are a warning that old diseases can reappear with particular violence and with drastic effects on economy and development. Another important conclusion shown by the papers on 'Treatment of Typhoid' and 'Problem of Plasmodium Falciparum Resistance to '4. aminoquinoline drug', is that the emergence of resistant strains would present a serious public health hazard. Two papers are of interest in this group. One by Michelson discusses the control of medically important snails and advocates integrated control measures 'focused on environment, human populations, and snail hosts' as the measures of choice. The other, by Leithead, reviews the problems associated with heat stress and evaluates the known heat stress indices used. He also discusses some alternative approaches.

The third group of five papers deal with specific occupational health problems. One paper discusses the health problems of offshore operations. It seems that they are just curtain raisers to more severe hazards if man