Book reviews

Crisis in the Workplace—Occupational Disease and Injury: a report to the Ford Foundation. By Nicholas A. Ashford. (Pp. 589; illustrated; £11.60). MIT Press: London.

This is a very comprehensive overview of the whole area of occupational health and safety in the United States, written by an author with qualifications in chemistry and law. It must be stressed that it is a review of the scene in the USA as the section on the foreign experience, though interesting, is comparatively short. Much of the book is concerned with legal issues of which a considerable component, such as Federal versus State is of purely domestic interest to the USA or is likely to interest only those who wish to study comparative law.

The author's technique of writing resembles that of the film director who gives us the longshot, in this case the Summary, then the medium shot, the Introduction and finally a series of close ups, the main text of the Report. This is useful for those who wish to read at only one level, such as Summary, Introduction or main text but the repetition of matter in exactly the same words produces a sense of *déjà vu* in the reader who goes through it from beginning to end.

The author's main case is that the United States is the world leader in technological development but lags behind other countries in measures designed to safeguard health and safety. In the US (and this clearly applies in some measure at least to other countries) it is easier to take measures to deal with accidents than with hazards to health. The former are internalised in that they clearly occur in the organisation and the costs, including workman's compensation, have to be borne by the organisation. With disease it is far harder to identify the cause and the employee may have left the job years before symptoms develop.

According to estimates published in the book, industrially induced diseases kill about seven times as many people in America as are killed by industrial acci-

dents. Unfortunately, exact data on the incidence, causes and consequences of industrial diseases are lacking. Ashford believes that preventive occupational medicine is an activity which scarcely exists in the United States.

He very ably analyses the tensions which in a market economy impel management and unions alike to gloss over the hazards which lead to disease, whereas they cannot so readily ignore accidents.

British readers will find Section 2, 'The Nature and Dimensions of Occupational Health and Safety Problems' and Section 12, 'Agricultural Workers, A Special Case' most pertinent.

V. C. MARSHALL

Legal Rights and Duties in Medical and Nursing Service. By M. H. Whincup. (Pp. 54; £8.50 hard cover, £6.50 soft cover.) Ravenswood Publications: Beckenham. 1976.

This little book is No. 5 in the series *Studies in Health Service Management Law and Practice*. Any lawyer perusing the Table of Contents will realise at once the extremely wide ground which Mr Whincup seeks to cover. There are only three chapters, but they deal with Security of Employment, Safety of Employment and Premises, and the Practitioner's Duties, any one of which is the subject of large tomes (indeed encyclopaedias). The approach is therefore necessarily rather compressed, but it must be said that, to this reviewer, the language was readable and the law stated accurately. Mr Whincup apparently possesses the enviable gift of being able to take large masses of complex and sometimes controversial doctrine and to expound it in a way which means something to the layman yet does not offend the expert.

The book must therefore be welcomed as a very valuable aid to all who work in the Health Services as doctors or nurses. The only reservation must be the price, which for what is a quite slim volume,

seems rather inordinately steep, even by today's standards of steepness.

D. W. ELLIOTT

Electromagnetism, Man and the Environment. By Joseph H. Battocletti. (Pp. 92; illustrated; £2.95) Elek Books: London. 1976.

This book forms part of a series on 'Environmental Studies' and is in spite of its title concerned with the effects of electromagnetic fields on man. The theme of the book is that man may be adversely affected by the electromagnetic fields he produces, to which possibility the author draws our attention through his phrase 'electrical pollution'. This is clearly not a happy choice of phrase, since the occasionally beneficial effects of such fields, which the author properly stresses, correspond to no common use of the word pollution. The book is commended to 'environmentalists, ecologists, nuclear scientists, electronic engineers and medical students', as a 'timely warning on the growing effects of electromagnetism'.

What, then, are the growing effects of electromagnetism? Beginning with a study of the important sources of electromagnetic fields, the author treats us to an interesting and wide-ranging account of the reported phenomena associated with fields from DC to microwave frequencies (300 GHz). The reader who wishes to ascertain how hazardous his own particular involvement with electromagnetic radiation is, will probably remain unsatisfied after reading the book, since the literature on which it is based is often self-contradictory and no attempt has been made to resolve these contradictions. The overall impression however is that, apart from certain recognised and generally appreciated phenomena, the electrical pollution to which the general public is exposed may be safely ignored.

There are certain specific criticisms that may be made of this book. Even within the restricted scope outlined in the preface, some surprising omissions may be noted.