THIRD ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EMPIRE RHEUMATISM COUNCIL

(To organise research throughout the British Empire into the causes, and means of treatment, of Rheumatic Disease)

MY LORDS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

On account of the war, which has called away for service many of our members, and entails on most of the others difficulties in travelling, your Executive Committee considered that it would be in accordance with your wishes that the Annual Meeting should not be summoned this year. I shall not, therefore, have the pleasure of addressing you personally, but now present the Annual Report to October 31, 1939, noting that, if any member wishes to bring up a matter arising out of the Report, prompt attention will be given to it by the War Emergency Committee which has been constituted; and should there arise any question needing discussion at a general meeting (which I do not anticipate) a meeting will be summoned.

Last year, at this time, you will recall that we were able to chronicle satisfactory progress, though the period under review had been disturbed by constant rumours of war. All hope of escaping the calamity of war has proved vain. Faced with the alternative of seeing the fabric of European civilisation destroyed piecemeal, the British Empire, side by side with France, has been compelled to take up arms.

Since September your executive officers have devoted themselves to planning how to save, as far as possible, the work of the Council from interruption and at the same time to conserve our resources so that when peace returns the campaign against rheumatism may be carried on again with full vigour. The need at that time will be certainly greater than heretofore. We shall, almost certainly, have to face an increased incidence of Rheumatic Disease arising not only from the war casualties but from a degree of interruption of normal health services to the civil population.

You will be chiefly interested in our plans for the war period; but, before referring to them, I must give a brief record of the developments of our movement up to September last.

That development was so promising as to make its interruption specially tragic. First, there was manifest a strong growth of public interest in, and public determination to grapple with, the problems of Rheumatic Disease. This was shown notably at the meetings of the Rheumatism Section of the Annual Congress of the Royal In-
stitute of Public Health and Hygiene in the spring, and at meetings of various associations of the Approved Societies under the Health Insurance Act in the summer. At these meetings there was expressed strong sympathy with the aims of our Council. In April our President, H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, at a Mansion House meeting (the Lord Mayor of London presiding) stated those aims admirably, and expressed his full confidence that the peoples of the British Empire would bring them to success.

Secondly, we had good reason to be satisfied with the extending scope of our research work, and with indications which justified the hope that it was on the way to gaining definite results.

Thirdly, we were on the point of bringing to a successful issue several negotiations for the increase of centres for adequate treatment.

Thus, on all three fronts of our campaign against rheumatism—the education of the public; the research into causes; the remediing of the national scandal that only a percentage of sufferers can secure the treatment which, in many cases, would save them from lapsing into crippling disability—there was good progress.

That progress has been seriously interrupted, and, to some extent, the interruption must continue until peace comes.

There will be no captious criticism on our part, nor, I think, from any reasonable quarter, founded on the presumption that precautions were excessive at the outset of hostilities. It had to be recognised that we were entering into war against an enemy led by a personality who is altogether ruthless, and whose actions are, for pathological reasons, largely incalculable. There is little doubt that if the enemy had not been, at the outset, disappointed of the support relied upon from two powerful quarters, there would have been attempted the "lightning stroke." In that case, ruthless air attacks on London and other of our cities might have given ample employment to the emergency casualty services, for the organisation of which so much of the normal medical needs was sacrificed. Fortunately, events imposed upon the enemy a policy of timidity, and suggested to him the alternative tactic of playing for a kind of peace so that a better opportunity of mass attack might be sought later.

May we not take advantage of that and, without abandoning the measure of war precaution which present circumstances dictate, make some progress towards the normal measures of defence against those enemies which never pause in their attack—the agencies of disease?

In the treatment of Rheumatic Disease we know that, before the war, our national facilities were gravely deficient. As a consequence of the war emergency measures, they have been further reduced to a very considerable degree. Yet neglect of the rheumatic sufferer will inevitably bring a harvest of post-war cripples, not victims of shot and shell, but of Home conditions.
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RHEUMATISM COUNCIL 69

The Council’s Treatment Work

It is in the matter of treatment that there has been the gravest interruption of your Council's work. The Rheumatism Ward at the Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth has been temporarily closed; also the Rheumatism Clinic at the West London Hospital, in the establishment of which the Boroughs of Kensington, Hammersmith and Fulham co-operated with the Empire Rheumatism Council. These two centres were the first fruits of the Council’s work to remedy the lack of facilities for rheumatism treatment in the kingdom. Added to their loss is the suspension, for the time being, of negotiations—in one case on the point of completion, in other cases far advanced—for important new provincial centres. There are, however, two good facts to record. The rheumatism treatment centre at Edinburgh, under Professor Stanley Davidson, which is helped by our Scottish Fund, is continuing its work; also the St. John Clinic and Institute of Physical Medicine in South-West London is still carrying on.

But to state the full extent of the national loss of centres for rheumatic treatment since September, it is necessary to note the experience of other institutions not so directly linked with our Council, but working in co-operation with it, a co-operation which was developing in scope. The British Red Cross Clinic (the largest of London’s treatment centres) has closed its doors.* The Spa hospitals, in peace-time chiefly devoted to Rheumatic Disease, have been largely diverted from that purpose. I have not sufficient data on which to found a close estimate of the degree of interruption of such rheumatic treatment as was available at the General Hospitals in their out-patient and in-patient departments before the outbreak of war, but, undoubtedly, it has been very great.

So far I have referred to the treatment of adult rheumatism only. In regard to the treatment of juvenile rheumatism, there has been also grave interruption. Prior to this war, Great Britain had reason to be proud of the fact that the London County Council scheme for the prevention and treatment of Rheumatic Disease among school children was the best probably in the world; and a few other British municipal administrations had systems approaching it in efficiency. The dispersal of a large proportion of school children from industrial to rural areas has interrupted to a large extent the working of the London and other schemes. It will be recognised that that was unavoidable. Safeguarding the young from anticipated bombing attacks on the great cities was of paramount importance. But we may urge that a considered effort should be made by the national authorities to apply to children transferred to rural areas, in the degree

* The British Red Cross Clinic has since reopened (February, 1940).
that is possible, the health precautions which had been doing so much to shield them from disease.

Last year I noted that the task of preparing a report on a system of treatment which might be economically applicable to a large number of sufferers, and even possible of application on a national scale, was actively proceeding. The report had been brought near to completion, but the constantly deepening national anxiety in regard to the international position did not offer a favourable opportunity to bring it forward. Now it must await the return of peace.

The report of Dr. Tegner, holder of the Sir Alexander Walker Travelling Scholarship, on the work of Rheumatism Treatment Centres in Europe and North America, was presented in July and published in full in the fourth number of our official journal, Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases, and members will agree that it is a valuable record and analysis of foreign systems of treatment.

Your officers have formulated plans to place at the disposal of the defence authorities the scientific resources of the Council in dealing with the incidence of Rheumatic Disease in the fighting services during the present campaign; these will be put forward when the appropriate time comes.

The Council's Research Work

Happily, interruption of our Council's research work has been much less serious than that of treatment work. At first it was feared that practically all research would have to be suspended because of the taking over of hospital premises for war casualties and the calling up of workers for services. Later, with the absence of massive bombing attacks on London and other centres, it was found that most of our research work could be continued after a very brief interruption. To note in some detail the position on October 31.

The work of the Frederick Pearson—Sir Halley Stewart Foundation for research into the incidence of Rheumatic Disease in the training establishments of the Royal Navy seemed doomed to suspension, owing to the mobilisation of the Navy and the transference of some naval medical establishments. As the state of development of the work was highly promising, strenuous efforts were made to avoid this, and I wish to acknowledge the sympathetic help given by Surgeon Vice-Admiral Sir Percival Nicholls, Director of Naval Medical Services, in the matter. We can hope now that the work will be continued under Dr. C. A. Green at naval establishments. The section of the work under Professor Ernst Freund and his assistants at the West London Hospital has not been interrupted. The assistance given at Edinburgh University by Professor T. J. Mackie,
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RHEUMATISM COUNCIL

and at Glasgow University by Professor J. W. McNee, will, we hope, continue.

Work at the Sir Alexander Maclean Laboratory, the Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth, London, under Dr. C. B. Dyson, has been suspended temporarily, and also the work there of investigating the value of Occupational Therapy in the treatment of arthritis. This was made necessary by the national plan for taking over hospital accommodation for war emergency casualties.

Work at the Sir Alexander Maclean Laboratory at the Pimlico Clinic of the Order of St. John, under Dr. C. B. Dyson, has been suspended temporarily, and also the work there of investigating the value of Occupational Therapy in the treatment of arthritis. This was made necessary by the national plan for taking over hospital accommodation for war emergency casualties.

Work by Dr. E. G. L. Bywaters, in support of which the Empire Rheumatism Council is co-operating with the Beit Fellowship, at the British Post-graduate Medical School, University of London, is being continued.

Work by Professor E. Freund at Edinburgh University is being continued.

Work by Dr. C. Lutwak-Mann at the University of Cambridge is being continued.

Work by Dr. L. Michaelis at the Orthopaedic Department of the St. John Clinic is being continued.

Our official journal, ANNALS OF THE RHEUMATIC DISEASES, I may note here, has, during the year, made a remarkable contribution to the literature of Rheumatic Disease, having published many notable articles, including a particularly valuable paper from Professor Aschoff (the discoverer of the "rheumatic node"). I trust that members of the Council will do their utmost to extend its circulation, though, during the war period, for purposes of economy, we may have to limit the number of issues.

During the course of the year under review there was brought to the notice of our Research Advisory Committee promising results recorded by scientists of the Pilsudski University, Warsaw, in regard to a serological test for acute rheumatism. Action was at once taken to get into touch with those scientists and to support experimental work in this country in order to confirm their results. Professor Mackie of Edinburgh University and Dr. J. E. McCartney of London have both undertaken to investigate this matter. Unfortunately, we must presume that the research work of the Pilsudski University, Warsaw, has been suspended now that Poland is under the yoke of the invader. But when Poland is restored we may hope that contact can be resumed and this research work continued. The Polish scientists had promised to contribute to our official journal a record of their most recent results and to supply material for test purposes.

The Chemical Sub-Committee of the Scientific Advisory Com-
THE RHEUMATIC DISEASES


Dr. Green, Director of the Naval Research Foundation, represented the Empire Rheumatism Council at the Third International Congress for Microbiology, New York, and was invited to contribute a paper which, we have learned, aroused great interest. The report he has presented of the proceedings of this Congress is valuable for its notes on information concerning current research in rheumatism in the United States.

ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT

The check to organisation development has been great. Australia had arranged during the coming year a National Medical Congress on Rheumatic Disease at which a Council affiliated to, and with the same objectives as our own, was to be founded. That has been postponed.

Negotiations for the formation of two provincial Councils in the Home Country have had to be put aside for the present. In these matters, as in others referred to, the policy of your Executive has been to keep in mind that postponement does not mean abandonment, and that, as soon as circumstances permit, efforts in regard to these developments will be resumed.


Throughout the year your Committees and officials have given devoted zeal to the work of the Council, and I am confident that if you were assembled in the usual manner you would unanimously re-elect them, and express sincere thanks for their services. I shall be pardoned, I know, if I do not attempt to catalogue all who have given great service, but confine particular mention to Sir William Willecox, who has carried out the two onerous tasks of Chairman of
the Executive Committee and Chairman of the Research Advisory Committee; Dr. Mervyn Gordon, Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Committee, who is indefatigable in promoting the scientific activities of the Council; Mr. T. W. Robinson, who, as Chairman, and Sir Walter Kinnear as Member, of the Finance Committee, have given untiring zeal to the great responsibility of keeping us on the straight financial path; Mr. Timbrell Fisher, one of the Trustees; Dr. W. S. C. Copeman, the Hon. Medical Secretary, now on active service in France, but still continuing to give devoted attention to our work; and by no means last, though coming last in this list, Sir Frank Fox, O.B.E., who has given the Council invaluable service.

It is proposed by the War Emergency Committee that the standing Committees should remain as at present constituted, but that they be not summoned for meetings during the war period unless some special need arises. As soon as peace returns the Committees will be asked to resume their functions, and at a general meeting of the Council you will be invited to elect them anew.

I shall leave it to the Finance Committee to report to you on the funds of the Council, only commenting that prudent policy in the past has allowed us to go through a gravely troubled year without financial embarrassment.

In conclusion, let me thank the generous and public-spirited subscribers to our campaign and express the earnest hope that sufficient financial support will be forthcoming during the war period, from present supporters and from others, to ensure the continuance of the Council’s research work and its efforts to promote new treatment centres. In his inspiring speech at the Mansion House in April last our President, the Duke of Gloucester, stated: “We in this country have never allowed a necessary and urgent task of this kind to be neglected because of difficult times.” We must justify His Royal Highness’s confidence. The War on Rheumatism must be waged until victory is gained over a group of diseases which inflict on the community so much suffering and financial loss.

(Signed) HORDER,
Chairman of the Council.

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