

EMPIRE RHEUMATISM COUNCIL

PROGRESS REPORT BY THE ORGANISING SECRETARY

THE period since October, 1938, has been marked by considerable progress in the Empire Rheumatism Council's "War on Rheumatism." Some of the more important developments are here noted.

At the request of the International League against Rheumatism, the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Empire Rheumatism Council has taken the responsibility of appointing the National Committee to represent the League in Great Britain. This National Committee has been constituted as follows: F. J. Bach, D.M.; C. W. Buckley, M.D., F.R.C.P.; W. S. C. Copeman, M.D., F.R.C.P.; A. G. Timbrell Fisher, M.C., F.R.C.S.; R. Fortescue Fox, M.D., F.R.C.P.; G. Holmes, M.B.; G. D. Kersley, M.D., M.R.C.P.; B. Schlesinger, M.D., F.R.C.P.; Sir William Willcox, K.C.I.E., M.D., F.R.C.P.; Sir Robert Stanton Woods, M.D., F.R.C.P.

The work of the Research Advisory Committee is progressing well. There are at present three semi-permanent Research Foundations (for periods of from three to seven years). Each of these, apart from the work in its own laboratory, has helpful association with, and the active collaboration of, other research institutions at Universities and Hospitals. The number of additional research efforts financed by the Empire Rheumatism Council in various Universities or other institutions is now eight.

The work of the Research Foundation to investigate the incidence of Rheumatic Disease in the training establishments of the Royal Navy, in which the Admiralty Medical Services are co-operating with the Empire Rheumatism Council, is developing most favourably. A special Sub-Committee of the Research Advisory Committee (with co-opted members) has been constituted to supervise the work of this Foundation, as follows: Lord Horder, G.C.V.O., F.R.C.P.; W. S. C. Copeman, M.D., F.R.C.P.; Mervyn H. Gordon, C.M.G., F.R.S., D.M.; Professor Geoffrey Hadfield, M.D., F.R.C.P.; Professor T. J. Mackie, M.D.; Professor J. W. McNee, D.S.O., M.D., F.R.C.P.; Mr. Frederick F. A. Pearson; Dr. Bernard Halley Stewart, F.R.S.E.; Sir William Willcox, K.C.I.E., F.R.C.P. (Chairman).

The sub-committee has authorised Dr. C. A. Green to visit the U.S.A. to study the work of Dr. Homer Swift in investigating a virus infection as a causative factor in Rheumatic Disease.

Investigation of the successful results obtained at Warsaw University of a serological test for rheumatic infection is proceeding actively under the charge of Dr. Mervyn Gordon. The co-operation of the L.C.C. Medical Services, of Edinburgh University, of Dundee University and of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, has been enlisted. The latest reports from Warsaw state that the test has now been applied in 1,000 cases of rheumatism, and in numerous control cases, and the results continue to be highly specific.

The Chemical Sub-Committee of the Scientific Advisory Committee has instituted an investigation of gold therapy in rheumatoid arthritis, with a carefully planned system of controls and provision for independent assessment of clinical results and of statistical check. This sub-committee consists of: F. J. Bach, D.M.; W. S. C. Copeman, M.D., F.R.C.P.; Professor L. S. P. Davidson, M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.S.E.; Professor F. R. Fraser, M.D., F.R.C.P.; S. J. Hartfall, M.D.; Professor J. W. McNee, D.S.O., M.D., F.R.C.P.; W. S. Tegner, M.R.C.P.; E. C. Warner, M.D., F.R.C.P.; Lionel Whitby, C.V.O., M.D., F.R.C.P.; Sir William Willcox, K.C.I.E., F.R.C.P.

The propaganda work of the Council is progressing well, in spite of the preoccupation of the public mind with urgent questions of national defence. Total circulation of various educational pamphlets by the Council now approaches 25,000 copies; total attendances at educational meetings promoted about 4,000; total of Press articles regarding its work about 2,000—representing probably about 5,000,000 readers. It will be seen that the attention given by the Press is far the most important part of the Council's propaganda work.

It has been intimated to the Council by the Gas Light and Coke Company that, in a forthcoming educational film published by them, special attention will be given to the work of the Empire Rheumatism Council.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Approved Societies, London, June 9 and 10, Mr. E. G. Bearn, C.B.E., Deputy Controller Insurance Department, Ministry of Health, referring to Rheumatic Disease noted that "the Empire Rheumatism Council was energetically pursuing the study of this most deadly of all diseases."

The Annual Report, 1938, of the Joint Committee of Approved Societies devotes much attention to Rheumatic Disease; and urges the Approved Societies "to support the Empire Rheumatism Council to the limit of their powers." It calls attention to the fact that Approved Benefit 16 can only be applied to a very limited number of Rheumatism Clinics, and notes: "Approved Societies which have a widely distributed membership have begun to view with some concern the continued inclusion of a benefit in their schemes which, contrary

to all other additional treatment benefits, is necessarily restricted to those members who reside sufficiently near to the approved clinics to be able to attend as out-patients. A remedy for this would be the approval by the Department of other institutions and this, it is hoped, will shortly be announced."

The Conference of Trade Union Approved Societies at Scarborough (June) devoted much attention to Rheumatic Disease. The Presidential Address by Mr. G. W. Canter, after noting the voluntary work of the Empire Rheumatism Council, expressed strongly the view "that it is the duty of the State to undertake this work, no matter what the cost may be, until this curse has been successfully eradicated from our midst."

The Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene at its Annual Congress at Hastings, May 23-27, included a Section, "Rheumatism and Allied Diseases," for the organisation of which the Empire Rheumatism Council was invited to take responsibility.

Sir Frank Fox, O.B.E., was the President of the Section and took as the subject of his address "Industry and Rheumatism." There followed on the first day papers by Sir Morton Smart, K.C.V.O., M.D., on "Physical Medicine and Industry," and by Dr. G. C. Pether of the Devonshire Royal Hospital, Buxton, on "The Influence of Industry on the Development of Rheumatism."

The second day was given up to a discussion of the responsibility which various authorities could appropriately take in the war on Rheumatism. The subject was introduced by Capt. G. S. Elliston, M.C., M.P.; James Fenton, C.B.E., M.D.; and Professor L. S. P. Davidson, M.D., F.R.C.P.E., F.R.S.E.

On the third day there were papers by H. G. McGregor, M.D.; W. H. Bradley, D.M.; and H. A. Burt, M.B.; Dr. W. S. C. Copeman, Medical Secretary Empire Rheumatism Council, attended the Congress and arranged interesting and useful private conferences on Rheumatic Diseases, supplementary to the official proceedings.