

EMPIRE RHEUMATISM COUNCIL

FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT

NOVEMBER, 1940, TO NOVEMBER, 1941.

MY LORDS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

This is the third year in succession that I shall not have the pleasure of meeting you for discussion of the Annual Report. I regret the long lapse, for there is nothing more valuable to an organisation such as ours than personal contact and free debate among members. But it was considered inadvisable under war conditions to make demands on your time and on transport services by calling members of the Council to London. I submit to you the Annual Report to November, 1941.

Our President, H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, acknowledging the Report for 1940, expressed his pleasure that "the War on Rheumatism is being bravely and vigorously carried on" and added: "Please accept for yourself and convey to your colleagues and fellow-workers my congratulations on the good work of the past year, and my confident hopes of full success in the future."

The completion of the fifth year of our campaign suggests a brief retrospect. At our first Annual Meeting I outlined two programmes to be followed concurrently; with the hope that one, as regards treatment, would be for a short term; with the warning that the other, as regards research, would be for a longer term. At that date one could not foresee the destructive war which the fermenting of a morbid mind, finding a favourable medium in a morbid people, was about to inflict on mankind. That war has affected every humane activity. Ours was not excepted. The effect, however, has been to delay, but not to thwart, our plans. Viewed in the light of the vast events which have shaken the world, the large measure of attention we have won for a long-neglected problem of public health, and in particular the good progress of last year, is reason for reassurance.

To note the development of our two programmes:

TREATMENT

Publication, early this year, of *Rheumatism—A Plan for National Action*, in the preparation of which I had the valuable

collaboration of members of our Council, brought a notable awakening of public interest to the serious lack of facilities for effective treatment of Rheumatic Disease. The practical and reasonably economical scheme for remedying this which was outlined has stood the test of close examination by the medical and lay Press. There was no adverse criticism, but a general recognition that the damage to human well-being caused by Rheumatic Disease could, and should, be checked.

It may be stated, I think, that our Council has now fulfilled in large measure one important part of its duty—viz., to survey the position in regard to Rheumatism Treatment in the present state of medical knowledge and to show how action, on a scale comparable with that taken against other social plagues, could effect a prompt and great reduction in the number of lives now wrecked by its ravages.

The task still faces us of persuading the community, working through its appropriate authorities, to take action. They at any rate now know the nature of the task, and can see that it is not an impossible one. If the sight of means to do good deeds will make good deeds done, national and local administrators will see that the time to plan against Rheumatic Disease is *now*, even if some of the necessary measures must be postponed until peace conditions return.

There are several favourable facts to record in regard to the provision of effective means of treatment.

In March, Mr. James Currie Macbeth, Chairman of the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust, wrote to me with reference to the publication mentioned, "For many years I have considered that some national effort should be made with a view to minimising the loss in this country through rheumatic disease." He indicated that the Trust would be willing to consider helping such an effort. Sir Frank Fox visited Dunfermline and met Mr. Macbeth, some of his co-trustees, and Dr. Emslie Smith, Medical Officer of the existing Children's Clinic of the Trust. In negotiations which followed, Mr. Macbeth showed a cordial desire that the Trust should take action in the Burgh of Dunfermline against Rheumatic Disease commensurate with the excellent standard of its other work there for social welfare. The "cordial approval" of this by the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust was notified in August. Professor Stanley Davidson and Sir Frank Fox have been entrusted by the War Emergency Com-

mittee with the formulation of a detailed plan for discussion with the Trustees.

In May we learned that the late Miss Margaret Ann Cran, of Aberdeen, by her will, made a bequest of £1,000 and the residue of her estate (this residue estimated to yield about £9,000) for the purposes of a hospital or clinic for the treatment of rheumatism in Aberdeen, "preferably on the lines indicated by Professor Stanley Davidson," but subject to the approval of the Executory, to be established within five years after her death.

Professor Davidson and Sir Frank Fox (who have been entrusted with the negotiations) have seen Mr. Alexander Clark, advocate, acting for the Executory, and there is no doubt that our Council will be able to submit to the Executory a plan for an Aberdeen treatment centre, fulfilling the intention of the testatrix.

The Red Cross Rheumatism Clinic, the St. John Clinic, the West London Hospital Rheumatism Clinic, and other clinics in London, the Spa hospitals, and the few other treatment centres in the kingdom, continue their work, and the extent of the demand on their services shows how much it is valued.

So much is favourable, but it would be idle to pretend that this represents more than a gleam of promise on an otherwise dark picture. The position continues to be that only a small proportion of sufferers can obtain in the early stages of Rheumatic Disease the right diagnosis and the right treatment, which would save a very great proportion from becoming disabled. We have a constant stream of letters from sufferers asking where they can get advice and effective treatment in their neighbourhood; the answer must be generally disappointing. We hear of the absurdity that members of an Approved Society giving rheumatism treatment benefit are deprived of that benefit because of the impossibility of incurring travelling expenses and loss of time to reach a distant treatment centre.

We must press for national action based on recognition of the facts that Rheumatic Disease is the greatest single enemy of social well-being and economic efficiency in our land; that, in the present state of medical knowledge, it can be very largely diminished; and that the cost of the necessary measures by national and municipal authorities and by industrial organisations would be so moderate as to make them well worth while as a matter of economy, apart from considerations of humanity.

RESEARCH

To come now to our longer-term programme, research into causative factors. This, as reported to you last year, has had serious checks: the closing of one laboratory; the destruction of another laboratory by enemy action. But, nevertheless, much valuable work has been carried out, mainly in the search for the cause of acute rheumatism and for a definite test, serological or biochemical, of the rheumatic condition. Discovery in the first field would probably throw light upon other morbid conditions now classified in the rheumatic group of diseases. Discovery in the second field would clear away existing difficulties of accurate diagnosis.

The work of the Naval Research Foundation (Dr. C. A. Green, Director) makes excellent progress. The engagements of Dr. Green and of Professor Ernst Freund (Director of the section at the West London Hospital) have been extended for one year.

Dr. Green has submitted a comprehensive report on his investigations. The subject-matter of this report was submitted by him to Edinburgh University as his thesis for the M.D. degree. That degree was awarded him, also the degree of Ph.D. and a gold medal.

The Sir Halley Stewart Trust have renewed for a further year its financial grant to this Foundation. I take this opportunity to record again our cordial thanks to them, and to Mr. Frederick A. Pearson, for generous help; and our appreciation of the cordial co-operation of the Admiralty Medical Services and of the group of scientists who are giving distinguished assistance—chiefly Dr. Mervyn Gordon, Professor G. Hadfield, Professor J. T. Mackie, Professor J. W. McNee and Lt.-Colonel W. S. C. Copeman.

Dr. C. B. Dyson, Research Fellow at our Sir Alexander Maclean laboratory, Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth, accepted a post in the north as a general practitioner. Enthusiasm for research led him to offer to continue there, as far as practicable, his task. This offer was gladly accepted, and the equipment of the laboratory temporarily transferred to him. His work, which is honorary (our Council meeting the expenses incurred), is assisted by Dr. Margaret Green.

Dr. Cecilia Lutwak Mann has continued her work at the University of Cambridge School of Biochemistry, and this year published a paper on "Enzymic Decomposition of Amino-Sugars."

In the field of clinical research, good work has been done: testing techniques for local injection in the treatment of fibrositic forms of rheumatism; investigation of the results of treatment of rheumatism by gold salts, etc. Clinical research work is, however, seriously hampered by the lack of treatment centres which can undertake investigations under the necessary control conditions of (a) careful preliminary diagnosis, following an agreed standard classification of the forms of Rheumatic Disease, and (b) clear record of clinical results, following again a standard form. The Council is hopeful, as new treatment centres are established, of greater progress in clinical research.

OFFICIAL JOURNAL

Our official journal, *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*, has maintained its high standard, publishing important papers by British and American authors. During the year Dr. Loring T. Swaim, M.D., President of the American Rheumatism Association, accepted an invitation to join the Editorial Committee as American Editor. This is another instance of the growth of cordial co-operation between American and British scientists in the war on rheumatism. The Editorial Committee now consists of 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., Mervyn Gordon, C.M.G., F.R.S., and Loring T. Swaim, M.D.

EDUCATION

The year has seen notable progress in our educational work. Despite preoccupation of public interest in that other war, our war on rheumatism won more Press attention than at any period since 1937. The total number of articles and reports in important British and American papers during the year numbered some 200, most of them lengthy. Since practically all British publications have been reduced to half their normal size by war conditions, this is a gratifying record. Sincere thanks are due to the "Fourth Estate of the Realm" for recognition on its part of the humanitarian and economic importance of our work.

From the United States of America there has come cordial appreciation of the last Annual Report by leading rheumatologists and medical journals. One of the latter, in a leading article, expressed the hope that the British effort "should stir

our country to do likewise." To be credited with setting an example to the great Republic is high praise.

I was happy to accept an invitation to sponsor, on behalf of our Council, a movement to establish in Massachusetts a Rheumatism Treatment Centre on the lines we advocate.

WORK FOR THE ARMED SERVICES

I have little to add to my report last year on this matter. We continue to do all that is in our power to help Navy, Army and Air Force with their problems arising from Rheumatic Disease, and gratefully recognise an increasing degree of willingness to accept our co-operation.

ADMINISTRATION

The death of Sir William Willcox in July last was a grievous loss to our Council. I know that all members will join with me in recording grateful appreciation of his services and sympathy with his family. In the course of a long and distinguished career as a physician there was perhaps no service for the public good which more closely engaged his sympathy than the work of the Empire Rheumatism Council. From its foundation he acted as a Trustee, as Chairman of the Executive Committee and as Chairman of the Research Advisory Committee. In all these offices his knowledge, his tact and his human sympathy were of the highest value.

Mr. A. G. Timbrell Fisher was left by this loss as the sole surviving Trustee. The War Emergency Committee considered it advisable to increase the number of Trustees to four. Col. the Rt. Hon. John Gretton, M.P., Sir Walter Kinnear and Lt.-Col. W. S. C. Copeman agreed to act and have been duly appointed. I have myself undertaken the chairmanship of the War Emergency Committee. Since the Research Advisory Committee is not meeting during the War Emergency, it is proposed to postpone the appointment of a new Chairman until peace conditions return.

In May it was decided to remove our headquarters from the Temple to a temporary office at 326, Finchley Road, London, N.W.3. The decision was not lightly taken. Attacks by the New Barbarism on the Temple were frequent, and the effects of explosive and incendiary bombs in January, March and May had left our office still standing in a scorched remnant of its

building, but a move was considered advisable. All our records and property were undamaged and there was no interruption of work.

The Council will wish to place on record again its appreciation of devoted zeal in your work during the year by members of the War Emergency Committee—viz., Dr. C. W. Buckley, Lt.-Col. W. S. C. Copeman, A. G. Timbrell Fisher, Dr. Mervyn H. Gordon, Col. the Rt. Hon. John Gretton, Col. F. D. Howitt, Sir Walter S. Kinnear, T. W. Robinson, H. Gordon Thompson. The Committee has met as often as necessary. Good staff organisation—obtaining decisions in certain matters by postal vote and in other matters seeking consultations with individual members of the Committee—has kept down the number of meetings. There is in our work, as you will know, a great amount of negotiation and correspondence—great in bulk and intrinsic importance—and many possible pitfalls. I have reason for confidence that the work is carried out with care and discretion by our wise and energetic organising Secretary, for whom no praise is too high.

I leave to the Finance Members of the War Emergency Committee to report on our financial position, noting only that this year we have done considerably better than in the two previous years. Our cordial thanks are due to those who have steadily continued their support and to others who have joined the ranks of our good providers. The Prudential Assurance Company, with its Approved Society, by the extent of its wise and public-spirited aid to the War on Rheumatism—coming second only to that of our first large benefactor, Sir Alexander Maclean—has given a splendid example to other great national organisations in supplying the munitions for that war.

Munitions are essential. You cannot wage war without them. But I know you will agree with me in withstanding any tendency to give undue importance to money-collecting. What we ask is the investment by the community of a sum, really insignificant in view of the benefit to be reaped, for bringing Rheumatic Disease under control. It is not material what portion of that sum passes directly through our books; the important thing is that it should be spent wisely.

THE FUTURE

At our first Annual Meeting, in acknowledging a vote of thanks, I ventured the apophthegm "That the Empire Rheumatism Council

would best justify its existence by bringing that existence to an end as soon as possible." My intention was to impress that our task was one of urgency and also one of distinct hopefulness. The date for the end of our existence can be defined as the date on which Rheumatic Disease is brought under control; effective treatment available for all; research, if not yet successful in all its quests, sufficiently endowed for any tasks remaining to be done. I believe that we are on the threshold of the first objective. The second objective will engage us for a longer term. But there are promising indications that it will be a reasonable term. Certainly I do not envisage such a period as elapsed between the time when Herodotus acutely observed that the fishermen of the Nile delta suffered relatively less than others from the prevalent malaria, and guessed that it was because the nets they hung to dry over their huts "kept out the malarial air." It took many centuries to discover that, by the change of one word, "mosquito" for "air," there was the key to the control of the greatest of the tropical scourges. We may confidently expect that discovery of the key to the causation of Rheumatic Disease will be a matter of years, not of centuries.

(Signed) HORDER.

FINANCE REPORT

Last year the hope was ventured that new subscriptions during 1941 would be greater than in the previous year (when we refrained from any general appeal to leave the field clear for the urgent claims of war charities). The hope was realised. New subscriptions totalled £3,946 in cash or covenants. In addition we may rely in the near future upon a sum of over £10,000 from an Aberdeen bequest, and a sum, which cannot yet be estimated, from the Dunfermline Carnegie Trust. These results are encouraging for the future, but much larger resources should be available for the post-war period if we are to continue our research work and take our rightful part in securing a national plan of treatment.

Financial administration during the past year has had to meet special difficulties as the result (1) of various changes in financial legislation and (2) of enemy action. We acknowledge again with thanks the helpful attitude of the Charity Claims Department of the Inland Revenue. The special provision in the Finance Act, 1941, regarding Seven Years Bonds will not

prejudicially affect our interests; this because from the outset we adopted a form of covenant departing from the more usual form but designed to meet the possible contingency of changes in the rate of Income Tax.

Careful economy has been observed, but we thought it desirable to modify somewhat the sacrifices volunteered by the staff on the outbreak of the war. Our small Reserve Fund has been increased by £2,125. It is invested at from 2½ to 3 per cent. in Government securities which cannot depreciate in capital value and are fully liquid.

This year closes the first quinquennium of the Council's work. A brief survey of the whole financial position may be useful. At the outset we planned for a revenue of £150,000 within seven years. The first year, when subscriptions totalled just on £25,000, was encouraging. Then (1938) came war forebodings. In that year the value of the 365 "key securities" on the London Stock Exchange fell by £270,000,000, the lowest since 1933. The effect of this (and later of the outbreak of war) on charity subscriptions was great. Up to November, 1940, our total subscriptions had reached only £48,822. The 1941 results showed a recovery, as noted. It is, perhaps, not too much to hope for that our preliminary budget of £150,000 may be realised within a ten, instead of a seven, years' period and that within that term the purpose of the Council will be to a large extent achieved.

(Signed) T. W. ROBINSON,
W. S. KINNEAR.

(Finance Members of the War
Emergency Committee).

AWARDS FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY

The Empire Rheumatism Council have been informed by the American Congress of Physical Therapy for 1941:

"In recognition of distinguished contributions to the medical science of physical therapy, Gold Key awards were made to four world-renowned individuals by the American Congress of Physical Therapy. First of the four men was President Franklin D. Roosevelt, to whom a key was presented in appreciation and recognition of his long interest and support of the medical fight against infantile paralysis. The other three men singled out

for their distinguished service to physical therapy were Dr. William Bierman, New York specialist, faculty member of New York University and attending physical therapist at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York; Lt.-Col. W. S. C. Copeman, eminent scientist of London, England, and honorary secretary of the British Rheumatism Council; and Bernard M. Baruch, noted industrialist and financier. . . .

“Lt.-Col. W. S. C. Copeman, of London, England, author, executive, scientist, and physical therapist, was honoured for his recent contribution to the advancement of physical therapy in developing a remarkable military physical therapy organisation in the field under the most unfavourable conditions. Lt.-Col. W. S. C. Copeman’s description of his improvisation of physical therapeutic equipment during actual warfare has so greatly impressed the American Congress of Physical Therapy that special recognition was given by the American organisation to this English associate.”