

CHANGE AND RETROSPECT

The Editor of the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* has kindly suggested that I should write a note in this issue about the journal with which he and I have been so closely associated now for many years. What has prompted him to do this is the fact that in 1963 we shall be publishing six issues of the *Annals* yearly, instead of four. This change from quarterly to bi-monthly frequency has been made in many of the other specialist journals brought out by the British Medical Association under the publishing wing of the *British Medical Journal*. It is a step we take with some caution, because it means more work for the editorial and managerial departments of the *B.M.J.*, and an increased subscription; and in particular it implies a faith in the advancement of knowledge of the specialty to which the journal is devoted.

The reader will notice that the title of the *Annals* remains the same, and I hope it will be many years yet before the term "rheumatic diseases" is entirely replaced by the term "rheumatology". But it seemed natural enough to call the official periodical of the International League against Rheumatism, founded in 1928, *Acta Rheumatologica*. This was edited from Amsterdam by the late Dr. J. van Breemen, who, as long ago as 1913, had suggested that an international institute for scientific research into rheumatism should be founded. After the first world war he returned to the attack, and in 1927 an international committee, formed under the presidency of Dr. R. Fortescue Fox, led to the establishment of the League in 1928.

The British Medical Association set up a committee on chronic rheumatic diseases in 1931, and a similar committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Humphrey Rolleston, was appointed by the Royal College of Physicians of London in 1934, an event of some note because of the four annual "Reports on the Chronic Rheumatic Diseases" that came out of the R.C.P. committee under the editorship of Dr. C. W. Buckley, assisted as he was then by Dr. W. S. C. Copeman.

Another outstanding event in the history of this subject was the foundation in 1936 of the Empire Rheumatism Council under the chairmanship of Lord Horder, and of the Heberden Society under that of Dr. M. B. Ray.

In 1939, after the fourth annual report had been issued by the Royal College of Physicians, a small

group approached the B.M.A. to discuss the possibility of continuing these as a quarterly publication. But for some reason or other there was a change of course in favour of bringing out an apparently more popular kind of periodical than had been anticipated. And so it happened that a quarterly journal entitled *The Rheumatic Diseases*, edited by Dr. C. W. Buckley, Dr. W. S. C. Copeman, and Mr. A. G. Timbrell Fisher, and sponsored by the Empire Rheumatism Council was published by Messrs. H. K. Lewis. Once again a war intervened; yet the journal survived, though with difficulty, and in 1941 Dr. Loring T. Swain, of the American Rheumatism Association, joined the editorial committee, and in May, 1942, Dr. Philip S. Hench.

Towards the end of the war the B.M.A. was once again approached, and the first number published over its imprint appeared in January, 1944, with a foreword by Lord Horder.

The editors of the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* have always valued their links with other countries through the International League and also the European League against Rheumatism. In particular, a close relationship developed between rheumatologists—I am afraid the word cannot be avoided—of Britain and of America. From 1950 to 1956, for example, the proceedings of the scientific meetings of the American Rheumatism Association were printed in this journal. There finally came the time when our American colleagues canvassed the idea of publishing in the U.S.A., under the auspices of the American Rheumatism Association, a separate journal of their own.

It was realized that one probable result of this would be a severance of the formal link between the *Annals* and the American Rheumatism Association, and this no one here in Britain wished to see. Another practical consequence feared by some was a falling-off of the circulation of the *Annals* in the U.S.A. But I am sure we all felt that every effort should be made to continue our close relationship with the American Rheumatism Association and to discourage our colleagues in the U.S.A. from publishing another journal, largely because the research then being undertaken on both sides of the Atlantic could comfortably be recorded between the blue covers of the B.M.A.'s periodical.

Personally, I did not take the view that the projected separation would harm the British *Annals*.

Indeed, I thought that a little friendly competition would be a healthy thing and a stimulus to the study of the chronic rheumatic diseases. There was much correspondence on the subject, and in particular a few of us had discussions with members of the American Rheumatism Association. I myself recall being closely examined on the subject in New York in 1956, when I was interested to find that our American colleagues were worried that the Empire Rheumatism Council was not a parallel organization to the American Rheumatism Association. It has often occurred to me since that the word Empire might have puzzled them a bit. However, there was no doubt of their eagerness to start their own journal, and though their Association has parted company with us the *Annals* still retains on its editorial committee three distinguished rheumatologists from the U.S.A.: Dr. Philip S. Hench, Dr. Walter Bauer, and Dr. Edward Boland.

I have perhaps been more closely associated with the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* than with any of the twelve other specialist periodicals published in connexion with the *British Medical Journal*, if only for the reason that in its early issues it seemed to suffer more than most from growing pains—appropriately enough. I recall with affectionate memory many earnest consultations with Dr. C. W. Buckley, who in the course of twenty years edited first the Reports of the Royal College of Physicians of London, then the journal published by H. K. Lewis, and after that the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* when the B.M.A. began its publication in 1944. His knowledge of the subject was remarkable, and the painstaking care he gave to editing exemplary. Dr. Buckley had always been

efficiently and faithfully assisted by Dr. W. S. C. Copeman, who, to everyone's pleasure, took on the editorship of the *Annals* in 1954 after Dr. Buckley's retirement

The enormous stimulus given to the study of the rheumatic diseases by workers on both sides of the Atlantic, and by Dr. Philip S. Hench in particular, has led to more research, more knowledge, and the publication of more papers. One sign of this is the increasing number of good papers submitted to the editor of the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*. This has at last necessitated our increasing the frequency of its publication from four to six times a year, accompanied by a necessary, but modest, increase in subscription.

When some years ago I told a learned friend of mine that we thought of bringing out still another specialist publication he surprised me by saying: "Much better do that than establish a new chair in a university, to be filled by a professor who will sit on it for the rest of his life and do little else. An editor has to edit his journal, and if it is well done it will stimulate the production of work." Backed by a strong editorial committee, Dr. Copeman has had the satisfaction of witnessing the proof of the latter part of this statement and of seeing the *Annals* go from strength to strength and become a potent stimulus to the subject he has made his own. But my learned friend would not be surprised to find exceptions to his rule: Dr. Copeman's editorial committee is as valuable as it is not least because of the professors on it.

HUGH CLEGG,
Editor, *British Medical Journal*.