the urinary output of thiocyanates. These factors include heavy smoking or heavy consumption of beer or tea, or consumption of large quantities of milk, eggs and other sources of animal protein, all of which contain preformed thiocyanate. Cyanogenetic glycosides occurring in many seeds used as foods may provide significant amounts of cyanides, as mentioned in our 1951 report, and cyanides and thiocyanates may be obtained from some raw vegetables such as cabbages. However, none of these factors appeared to be significant amongst our volunteers, and we believe that the thiocyanate they excreted was mainly endogenous in origin. It was therefore of interest to find amongst them an average daily excretion per kg. bodyweight of 135 mg. $SCN^{1}$, as compared with an average of 96 mg. in control subjects who were also teetotal nonsmokers but were obtaining adequate amounts of vitamin $B_{12}$ from animal food in their diet. The urinary output of thiocyanates in the volunteers tended to be higher in those with lower serum $B_{12}$ levels, though the data so far obtained have not been sufficient to establish a clear correlation. It was found that injection of large doses of vitamin $B_{12}$ (0.1 to 0.5 mg.) reduced the excretion of thiocyanates.

**Vitamin $B_{12}$ as Animal Protein Factor.**

Whilst these investigations were under way a leading article in the *Lancet* for August 21st, 1954, drew attention to a recent American experiment on volunteers also living on a similar diet containing no animal food. These American volunteers were fewer in number (about 31 as compared with about 150 in our investigation) and had been living on the diet for a much shorter time. It was therefore not surprising that there were not observed any definite signs of deficiency, which could lead to the suggestion that vitamin $B_{12}$ might function as animal protein factor in man as in other animals. In view of the world shortage of animal protein, the possibility arises of economising in its use by replacement with vegetable protein, the biological value of which has been improved by addition of vitamin $B_{12}$, and thus doing for human nutrition what has already been done in the feeding of other animals. These implications, which were absent from the *Lancet* leading article, were brought out in a note we subsequently published in the *Lancet* and amplified in our report at Amsterdam. Arrangements are being made to publish this report both in Holland and in America, because of the interest it has aroused.

**Standardisation of Vitamins in Foods.**

Reference to our extensive investigations in this field has been made in a number of our previous reports. During 1954 there was an interesting development in the establishment by the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry of a Vitamin Commission to deal with certain aspects of this subject. Friendly relations have been established between this I.U.P.A.C. Vitamin Commission and the Vitamin Commission set up by the Federation Internationale Pharmaceutique at Zurich in 1947, in the development of which our laboratories have taken a leading part.

In these collaborative investigations there have been examined many samples of staple foods, including cereals such as wheat and barley, yeast and yeast extracts, and meat products of different types. The effects of germinating the cereals, and of submitting them to milling process before and after germination, have also been studied. Thus there has been gradually built up a fund of information about the nutritive value of these foods which provides a useful basis for the elaboration of new food products, controlled by means of approved analytical methods. In this way scientific organisation can help to ensure more efficient utilisation of the existing food supplies. Our experience in various British collaborative investigations on the standardisation of vitamins in foods, organised by the Medical Research Council and the Society of Public Analysts and other Analytical Chemists (now the Society for Analytical Chemistry) has proved useful in this respect.

## NAPT Fourth Commonwealth Health and Tuberculosis Conference, 1955.

**Tuesday, June 21st to Friday, June 24th.**

THE DUCHESS OF KENT, President of the National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, will attend the Association's Fourth Commonwealth Health and Tuberculosis Conference at the Royal Festival Hall, London, on the afternoon of Wednesday, June 22nd, and give a message of welcome to the delegates.

The Conference will be opened on Tuesday morning, June 21st, at 10 a.m., by the Rt. Hon. Iain MacLeod, M.P., Minister of Health, when the subject will be "The Preventive Outlook Today." Other Ministers who will attend the Conference are the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Home, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and the Rt. Hon. Alan Lennox-Boyd, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies, who will speak on "Tuberculosis—A Problem of Different Races."

Although the Conference is primarily a Commonwealth one, Tuberculosis is a world problem, and experts and delegates from a large number of countries will be coming. About a thousand representatives from fifty-three countries are expected. Conference speakers will include Dr. Johannes Holm, of the World Health Organisation, Dr. G. F. Kincade and Dr. E. L. Ross, Canada, Dr. P. V. Benjamin, India, Professor Arvid Wallgren, Sweden, Dr. H. G. Trimble and Dr. Walsh McDermott, U.S.A., Sir Geoffrey Marshall, Group Captain Cheshire, V.C., Dr. Peter Kerley, Mr. Desmond Bonham-Carter and Mr. Paul Jennings.

A pleasant occasion at the Conference will be the presentation of the NAPT Philip Medal to Dr. P. V. Benjamin, Technical Adviser on Tuberculosis to the Government of India, and President-elect of the International Union against Tuberculosis, for outstanding services in the anti-tuberculosis field. This is the first award of the Medal which is being given by the Council of the NAPT in honour of Sir Robert Philip, founder of the first Tuberculosis dispensary.

Of special interest this year will be the Exhibition which, in addition to an important Scientific side, will include an extensive Trade Section covering X-ray apparatus, microscopes and surgical instruments, drugs, medical books, etc. There will also be a Commonwealth Section with displays by different countries in connection with their anti-tuberculosis campaigns. Countries which have already arranged to take part are Aden, British Solomon Islands, Jamaica, Hong Kong, Malaya and Singapore. Other exhibition sections will include Art Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Rehabilitation and After-Care. The exhibition will be opened on Tuesday, June 21st, at 1.30 p.m., by the Rt. Hon. James Stuart, Secretary of State for Scotland.

Social functions for delegates include receptions to be given by the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London, the Royal College of Physicians, the British Medical Association, by other Societies and by the High Commissioner of India. Visits are being arranged to Lloyds, the Stock Exchange Newspaper Officers and the G.P.O.

## St. John Save-a-Life Weeks.

THE LIVES OF MANY holiday-makers may be saved this year as a result of a series of St. John "Save-a-Life Weeks," which are being organised throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland by the St. John Ambulance Brigade during the holiday season which commenced on May 21st.

In a large number of seaside resorts and inland towns, units of the Brigade will provide, free of charge, instruction in artificial respiration for any members of the public who wish to learn. Demonstrations will be staged, and in many cases a film will be shown, with the object of teaching the principles of artificial respiration to all who care to spend 30 minutes in

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