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Editorial.

THE UNITED KINGDOM HOSPITALS CONFERENCE.

The usefulness of discussion between workers is undoubted, and the representative Hospitals Conference held on April 1st and 2nd at the University College, Gower Street, W.C., was most instructive and interesting to those who took part in it. Mr. Charles Lupton, Chairman of the Conference Committee (representative of the Leeds General Infirmary), presided.

The first motion was proposed by Mr. Henry Johnson (Leicester Infirmary):—

“That it is desirable to supply gratuitous hospital treatment to those who are provided for by the Workmen's Compensation Act.”

On the suggestion of Dr. Frank Fowler (Royal Victoria Hospital, Bournemouth), the words were added:—

“Whom the Hospital Board shall consider unable to pay for medical attendance.”

The motion was then adopted.

The motion which aroused most discussion was that by the Hon. Sydney Holland, Chairman of the London Hospital:—

“That where they can afford to do so, hospital patients ought to be asked to pay for the food, medicines, and bandages supplied to them.”

Mr. Holland started with the axiom that it is economically unsound to give everything to everybody for nothing whether they can afford to pay for it or not. He stated that all the London hospitals were in a serious financial condition, and looked forward to State aid as the only means of eventually solving the problem of their support.

Lieutenant-Colonel Montefiore pointed out that Mr. Holland's motion was contrary to the proposition adopted by the previous Conference—namely, “That inability to pay should be the consideration for the admission of all patients.”

Dr. H. Davy (President of the British Medical Association), Dr. Beverley (of Norwich, late Chairman Hospitals Committee, British Medical Association), Dr. Heron (City of London Hospital for Diseases of

the Chest), and others also opposed the motion, which was supported by Mr. Carnt (Manchester Royal Infirmary) and Dr. Fox (Plymouth Royal Eye Infirmary).

Mr. Holland's proposition was carried.

The next motion was one ably advocated by Lieutenant Colonel Montefiore (Charity Organisation Society) who moved:—

“That in the opinion of this Conference the appointment of trained hospital almoners constitutes one of the best methods for checking the misuse of hospitals and for rendering more effective the economic value of an out-patient department.”

Colonel Montefiore showed that since an almoner had been appointed at the Royal Free Hospital, about twelve years ago, at the instigation of the Charity Organisation Society, the desirability of the principle had been gaining ground.

The motion, on being put to the meeting, was carried, as was also one by Mr. H. Harben (St. Mary's Hospital), advocating close co-operation between the outpatient departments of hospitals, provident dispensaries and local medical practitioners.

On the second day one of the principal questions discussed was the organisation of county guilds for the support of hospitals, introduced by Mr. R. H. Kinsey (Bedford County Hospital) and supported by Lord Ampthill, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., Chairman of the hospital, who described the system as a decentralisation of effort and a concentration of control. It had been suggested, he said, that the scheme was antagonistic to the League of Mercy, but this was not so. They had to meet the competition of the League, but preparation to meet competition was a different thing from assuming a hostile attitude.

In accordance with an amendment by the President of the British Medical Association to a resolution in favour of the notification of tuberculosis, the Conference decided to ask the Government to appoint a Commission to recommend the best way to deal with tuberculosis.

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