

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

The fourth volume (part I.) of the Annual Report of the London County Council for 1931, by Sir Frederick Menzies, K.B.E., M.D., etc., County Medical Officer of Health, and School Medical Officer, which deals with the Hospitals and General Medical Services under the control of the Central Public Health Committee, has now been published.

It contains an immense amount of concentrated information relative to these Services, and may be purchased, either directly or through any bookseller, from P. S. King & Son, Ltd., 14, Great Smith Street, Westminster, London, S.W.1, price 2s. 6d.

The transfer to the control of the London County Council, under the provisions of the Local Government Act of 1929, of the hospitals and institutions under Boards of Guardians and the Metropolitan Asylums Board, as well as of the London Ambulance Service, imposed a formidable task upon the Council. Its first step was to survey these hospitals and institutions.

The Report states that the hospital branch is divided into two main sections, one dealing with general hospitals and the other with special hospitals. At the end of 1931 there were 44 general hospitals and institutions, with a total bed accommodation of 27,553. This work, moreover, includes a number of ancillary services such as medical instruction and training of nurses and midwives in connection with the hospitals, the provision and management of district medical and nursing services and dispensaries and of medical and nursing services for public assistance institutions, institutional maternity work, and arrangements for the institutional care of healthy children under three years of age separated from their parents.

The special hospitals division deals with the management of 31 hospitals (containing 13,390 beds), 17 of which are for infectious diseases. Provision is made in these for the instruction of medical students, and of candidates for the diploma in public health, and in the infectious, tuberculosis and children's services for the training of nurses.

The Report states:—"Definite advance was achieved in the task of building up these services into what is the most extensive municipal hospital organisation in the world.

"Although the general economic events of the autumn could not fail to have their effects on the actual rate of development, there was no deviation from the programme that the Council had set itself, but only a pause to ensure that the money available was used for the most pressing needs."

It should be remembered that in addition to the hospitals enumerated above the great Mental Hospitals for patients from the London area were previously under the control of the London County Council and are not dealt with in this Report, but the observation wards in the transferred hospitals and institutions are referred to and the inadequacy of the accommodation for mental patients in these hospitals and institutions commented upon.

"In May, 1931, there were 19 observation units. All the units possessed one or more padded cells, but the arrangements for the classification and segregation of patients were in the main defective and many of the units were somewhat gloomy and ill-equipped, while only two enjoyed the benefit of a mental consultant. The Council decided on the gradual reorganisation of the mental units on the general principles of the concentration of observation wards into larger units as planning and development

schemes permitted, and the appointment of mental specialists to a larger number of units." This policy has been carried out with excellent results, and the experiment of appointing two psychiatric social workers for a period of one year has proved a great success; the medical superintendents and consultants for whom they work are enthusiastic about the value of their services, so the appointments have been continued.

The reorganisation of the accommodation for venereal disease has now been completed and the units are fully equipped for diagnosis and treatment by the best modern methods. "The campaign for the eradication of venereal disease in London should be greatly strengthened by the unification of forces now in progress."

Uniform dietaries, in nine different scales, have been drawn up for the patients in the Council's appropriated hospitals, but it was fully recognised that medical considerations of the patients' requirements were paramount, and that the hospital medical officer should have full power to supplement the diets by such articles as, in his opinion, were necessary for the treatment and welfare of the patients under his charge."

Very interesting is the section on "hospital libraries," and we are told that "experience has shown the value of a well stocked and efficiently run library in the curative equipment of every hospital."

We notice that the Committee on "Hospital Standards" have considered the planning of the sanitary annexes in relation to wards to avoid the necessity for nursing staff having to walk long distances. They are of opinion that, in planning new wards, if the position of the main sanitary annexe is such that it involves the nurse carrying a bedpan having to pass more than eight beds, there should be some additional provision for dealing with the bed-pans."

In relation to the Hospital Nursing Service the Report states that "In the year 1931 considerable progress was made in the development of a high standard of nursing in the hospitals under the control of the Council.

"Approximately 100 sisters and 500 staff and probationer nurses were added to the staff of the general hospitals, thus making it possible to dispense with the services of temporary nurses previously engaged from nursing associations. Owing to lack of accommodation it was necessary to arrange for a certain number of trained staff nurses and Sisters to be non-resident. This procedure has proved very successful."

There has been a steady improvement throughout the year (1931) in the quality and an increase in the number of applications for appointment to all grades of the nursing staff, the total applications being 20,575. In addition to these applications over 600 transfers within the Service, for further training and promotion, were arranged; 3,042 nurses were engaged by the Council.

"In the special departments," the Report states, "every endeavour has been made to appoint officers who, in addition to general training, hold certificates in the particular branch of work for which they are required, as for example, sister housekeeper, three years' training in general nursing, and, in addition, two or three years' training in domestic science. It is hoped to extend this procedure as vacancies occur in future."

"The training of probationer nurses has been specially considered with a view to obtaining a uniform standard throughout the Service, and for this purpose a special Board of Medical and Nursing Examiners has been appointed by the Council, and the centralisation of the Hospital Final Examination for Nurses will commence to operate in 1932." The Nurse Examiners appointed are Miss Cockayne, late Matron of the West London Hospital, Hammersmith; Miss Lane, a member of the

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