

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

CAPITAL COST OF CONSTRUCTION AND THE ANNUAL COST OF MAINTENANCE OF HOSPITALS PROVIDED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

The Departmental Committee on the cost of hospitals and other public buildings have now made their first report (on the acute general hospital) to the Right Hon. Sir H. Kingsley Wood, M.P., Minister of Health, in discharge of the commission entrusted to them by his predecessor in office by his Minute of July 5th, 1933.

TERMS OF REFERENCE.

To consider and report on the questions of the capital cost of construction and the annual cost of maintenance of the following classes of public buildings provided by local authorities—viz., hospitals (including mental hospitals), public assistance institutions, mental deficiency institutions, maternity homes (including maternity departments newly constructed or added to hospitals), and baths and wash-houses—special regard being paid to (a) the establishment and periodic revision of standards; (b) modern methods of construction; and (c) the possibility of securing a reduction in present costs without impairing the efficiency of the buildings for the purposes for which they are designed.

MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE.

Mr. Adam Maitland, M.P. (Chairman); Mr. J. Allcock, O.B.E., F.I.M.T.A., F.S.A.A.; Mr. A. Strachan Bennion, F.S.I., M.I.Struct.E., Dr. H. W. Bruce, M.D., F.R.C.S.; Dame Janet M. Campbell, D.B.E., M.D., M.S., Mr. R. C. Cox, M.A., M.Inst.C.E.; Dr. J. Ferguson, M.B., D.P.H.; Mr. J. Kirkland, O.B.E.; F.R.I.B.A.; Miss F. Barrie Lambert, C.B.E., M.B., B.S., D.P.H.; Dr. T. S. McIntosh, M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P.(Ed.); Mr. R. H. P. Orde, B.A.; Mr. L. G. Pearson, F.R.I.B.A., Mr. C. F. Roundell, C.B.E.; Mr. A. Scott, M.B.E., F.R.I.B.A., M.I.Struct.E.; Dr. W. Rees Thomas, M.D., F.R.C.P., D.P.M., Mr. J. A. Lawther, M.B.E. (secretary).

N.B.—The present chairman was appointed by Minute dated May 25th, 1936, in place of Sir L. Amherst Selby Bigge, K.C.B. Mr. Strachan Bennion, Dame Janet Campbell, and Dr. Barrie Lambert were added in 1933, and Mr. Roundell in 1934, in place of Mr. M. B. Batterbury, in which year also Mr. Lawther was appointed secretary in place of Mr. J. Topping.

It will be noted that though the terms of reference include matters on which registered nurses would have been able to give valuable advice, notably on ward construction and the residential accommodation required for the nursing staff, no registered nurse had a seat on the Committee.

Among the many witnesses, Miss L. S. Clark and Miss J. Inglis represented the County and County Borough Hospital Matrons' Association.

The Committee's aim has been to advise on a scale consistent with true economy and to make recommendations based on good quality without extravagance, and they believe that if their recommendations are adopted they will have the effect of bringing about a reasonable degree of uniformity of cost at an economical level.

The Report sets out in detail the requirements of an acute general hospital.

Accommodation.

Among the conclusions as to accommodation are the following:—

The standard ward unit should contain 30 beds, of which four should be in separate one-bed rooms. The replacement of the main ward by two or more smaller wards is considered "well worthy of consideration."

The Reception Department should contain a waiting-room, at least two examination rooms (which may be divided into cubicles), sanitary accommodation, a nurses' room, a room for surgical dressings and minor operations, and at least one single-bed ward with a separate exit for an infectious patient.

Visitors.

Waiting accommodation for the relatives and friends of patients who are dangerously ill or who are undergoing an operation must be provided. It is sometimes considered necessary to provide couches and a canteen for people who have to wait for a long time.

Covered waiting accommodation should be provided for patients' visitors assembling on ordinary visiting days. "In recent years there has been a great increase in the numbers of patients' visitors," comments the Report, "and the problem which their accommodation presents is difficult to solve. While we recognise that some waiting accommodation is required for them, we consider that in the interests of the patients themselves as well as in the interests of general convenience and economy the number of visitors should be strictly limited."

Nurses.

In nurses' dining rooms there should be sufficient space to permit the use of small tables.

As a general rule the nursing staff should not be accommodated in the Administration Block, but in a separate nurses' home, in which Administrative Sisters should have their own bedrooms and sitting rooms, and Ward Sisters bed-sitting rooms.

The Report is published by the Stationery Office, price 1s. 3d.

STANDARDS OF SANITATION IN BACON FACTORIES.

The Bacon Development Board has, it is announced, laid down standards of sanitation that curers must observe as a condition of their 1937 licences. It is good news that these call for adequate drainage, cleanliness of premises and equipment, proper ventilation and lighting, construction and use of premises to avoid contamination of carcasses, facilities for the employees to keep themselves and their equipment clean, and safeguards against the use of diseased or damaged pigs. In the curing of bacon it is essential to have an almost clinical standard of cleanliness.

DIRTY COPPERS AND DISEASE.

We were reminded by a friend of the danger of handling dirty coppers which might have been never washed or disinfected from the time they were issued from the Mint, and, indeed, the danger of contracting skin diseases through this medium should not be disregarded. We usually keep bus fares in our glove, and we were warned that unless coppers had been well washed and disinfected this was a risky habit—as eczema, or itch, might thus be contracted—as very serious attacks had been traced to the handling of coppers. We now have every copper we use well scoured and disinfected before use, and if everyone would exercise the same precaution, there is no knowing the extent of prevention of disease which might be effected. Anyway, let us all take this trouble for the protection of others.

RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP FOR TAVISTOCK CLINIC.

The Trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation have given a further research fellowship for a year to the Tavistock Clinic. The fellowship is held by Dr. A. T. Macbeth Wilson, who is engaged on the study of certain diseases—peptic ulcer, essential hyper tension, diabetes mellitus, and Graves' disease—whose onset has often been related to emotional disturbances in the lives of patients.

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