

## THE STATUS OF THE GENERAL HOSPITALS.

The subject of the greatest interest in connection with the organisation of hospitals under the management of the Minister of Health came as a veritable bomb when the *Evening Standard* of Friday, February 22nd, announced that all trusts were now in danger as Mr. Aneurin Bevan, Minister of Health, intended to control all hospitals, including the great General Hospitals in England, Wales and Scotland, and thus manipulate their finances.

This determination upon the part of the Minister of Health had been kept secret, and so far no announcement has been made by the General Hospitals concerning their management and financial dependence.

Millions of pounds in bequests and trusts which have been devoted to the care of the sick and to medical research will probably be transferred to charities now that Mr. Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Health, intends to nationalise all public hospitals in the country.

In the opinion of the *Evening Standard* the plan places all hospital trust funds in jeopardy. Biggest of the trusts is the £10,000,000 Nuffield Foundation which has an annual income of £400,000 devoted to research, medical chairs and hospitals.

These funds for hospitals will now be diverted to charities not covered by nationalisation, such as Homes for the Blind, Cripples and Children.

One of these trusts, the Bernhard Baron Trust, which distributes £25,000 a year to hospitals will discuss this possibility at the next meeting.

More than fifteen million people subscribe to voluntary hospitals in England, Scotland and Wales each year.

When Mr. Bevan became Minister of Health, the *Evening Standard* continues, he told the negotiating body of Medicine representing every doctor, hospital and laboratory in the country which had been planning improvements in our Medical Service for months: "I am going to start from scratch, and I am going to tell you what to do."

The negotiating body was about 50 or 60 strong, and included some of the leading doctors in the country, as well as representatives of the B.M.A., the universities, the hospitals, and charities.

They had made considerable progress with Mr. H. U. Willink, the Minister of Health in the National Government.

Mr. Bevan met the negotiating body and said:—

"I am going to tell you what I am going to do and nothing will shake me.

"I will still talk to the negotiating body, the Voluntary Hospitals' Association, or the King Edward's Fund, but I have certain basic ideas and I am going through with them.

"From now on you can forget your negotiations and investigation in the past. From now on also all our discussions will be in confidence."

Some of the members told Mr. Bevan that it was hopeless to try to keep the discussions secret for long.

The *Evening Standard* reports that officials at the Ministry of Health are at work on the draft of a Bill by which Mr. Bevan will nationalise the hospitals.

Big financial problems will confront the Government when the pre-election plot to nationalise the hospitals becomes reality.

The plot was designed to keep Mr. Aneurin Bevan's plan to take over all voluntary hospitals secret until after the March County Council elections.

No. 1 problem will be the future of the capital value of the 1,112 voluntary hospitals of Great Britain. This amounts to £300,000,000.

Of this £250,000,000 represents the value of buildings, sites and equipment and £50,000,000 the worth of investments.

Some of the voluntary hospitals are public companies and others have a Royal Charter. They are run by trustees or committees of management so well that in 1941 they had an income surplus of £2,245,921.

### LEGACIES.

Next, legacies. The total sum bequeathed to hospitals this century approaches £100,000,000. About 75 per cent. of this is in free legacies which may be used for any purpose in the hospitals.

But what is to happen to the other £25,000,000 which was left for a special purpose, such as endowment of a bed?

Many thousands are invested by hundreds of "penny a week" and other contributory schemes for hospitals throughout Britain. Apart from £8,000,000 which is passed on direct from their 12,000,000 contributors to hospitals each year, most of these schemes have considerable investments, the interest on which is also given to the hospitals.

King Edward's Hospital Fund for London had assets in 1943 of £4,594,000, nearly all of which was in securities and investments. The interest on it is given to hospitals and the original gifts were intended for hospitals.

There is much speculation about these funds.

## "OUR FUTURE HEALTH SERVICES."

An admirable article appeared in the *Sunday Times* of March 3rd by Mr. Henry S. Souttar, F.R.C.S., President of the British Medical Association, on "Our Future Health Services."

"Considerations led the British Medical Association to adopt certain principles which they regarded as of fundamental importance in any future service, which may be briefly summarised as follows: We are opposed in the public interest to any form of service likely to lead to the profession as a whole becoming the full-time salaried servants of the State, and consider that the doctor should remain free to practise his art and to care for his patients without State interference. The citizen should be free to choose and to change his doctor and through him to obtain any consultant or hospital service he may require, and he should be free to do this either through the provided service or independently as he may desire.

"Every registered doctor should be free to share in the service where and how he may desire and should not be the subject of State direction. The hospital service should be co-ordinated over large areas, each hospital retaining its domestic autonomy, while on the co-ordinating councils and all other administrative bodies in the service there should be full medical representation.

### THE CONCERN OF ALL.

"It would be a mistake to imagine that these principles concern the medical profession alone. They affect every individual in the country in the most intimate relations of his life, and unless they are fully accepted in any proposed service the aims we have put forward cannot be achieved. The matter is the more urgent as the present is a time of unexampled opportunity.

### THE PROPER COURSE.

"That there should be a close co-ordination of our hospitals and that they should have the financial support and security which are vital to their work we should all of us agree. But this is a very different matter from annexing them, confiscating their property and imposing upon them a control in which they have no choice. It would be a poor reward for the magnificent service they have

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