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Home News

DOCTORS URGE GOVERNMENT TO CURB SMOKING

PROPOSED HIGHER TAXATION AND ADVERTISING RESTRICTIONS

Government action to curb the rising consumption of tobacco, especially cigarettes, is called for in a report which eight doctors, under the chairmanship of Sir Robert Platt, have prepared for the Royal College of Physicians. They conclude that cigarette smoking is the most likely cause of the recent world-wide increase in deaths from lung cancer, "the death rate from which is at present higher in Britain than in any other country in the world".

The report, which has been sent to the Ministry of Health, was approved for publication at a meeting of fellows of the college. It suggests six possible lines of action under the headings of public education, restriction of tobacco advertisements, wider restriction of smoking in public places, higher taxation, printing of smoke analyses on cigarette packets, and the organization of anti-smoking clinics.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

After a 2½-year study of smoking and health the panel declare that the evidence that cigarette smoking often has harmful and dangerous consequences is so convincing that preventive measures are undoubtedly needed. For the health of the present population of this country it is necessary, they say, that "any measures which are practicable and likely to produce beneficial changes in smoking habits" should be taken promptly.

Among preventive measures the report discusses the removal of harmful substances from tobacco smoke by filtration, modifications of tobacco to lower the tar content, and inducements to cigarette smokers to change to pipes or cigars.

The Tobacco Manufacturers' Standing Committee, who are concerned to promote research into the effects of smoking on health, yesterday criticized the college's report on several grounds. They said there was a growing body of evidence that smoking had pharmacological and psychological effects of real value to smokers. The main unspoken lesson of the report was the need for more intensive research.

The Tobacco Advisory Committee, who represent the industry in general trade matters, said that further taxation would be most inequitable and would penalize the many millions of smokers who derived pleasure and solace from smoking.

SURVEY FINDING

The report recalls that in the past 10 years the connexion between smoking and cancer of the lung and other diseases has been widely referred to, but it says that there is clearly room for more persistent public education. A recent survey in Edinburgh had shown that two-thirds of those wishing to discontinue the habit gave expense as the reason.

Many smokers regarded the lack of any official action against cigarette smoking as an indication that the evidence was "only theoretical" or "mere statistics". If the Government did not consider it necessary to take action, it was argued, no action was as yet required of the individual.

The following "decisive steps", the report states, should be taken by the Government:— PUBLIC EDUCATION.—Much more imagination, effort and money should be devoted to drawing the attention of the public to the hazards of smoking. Special attention should be paid to widespread education of schoolchildren, but use should also be made of every modern method of advertising, including posters, press notices, and short items on the radio and television. An educational campaign among children might be supported by more effective restrictions on the sale of tobacco to children.

The regulation of forbidding the sale of tobacco to children under the age of 16 is widely flouted, and in any case cigarettes are freely available in slot machines. LEGISLATION AIM ADVERTISEMENT RESTRICTION.—"While it may be doubtful whether advertisement restrictions should be initiated to curb the habit, and it is predominantly designed to attract smokers towards the advertiser's particular brand rather than to increase overall consumption, legislation to prevent or at least to restrict the advertisement of a habit which causes such widespread addiction to health would be reasonable and would provide evidence of official acceptance of the reality of the hazard."

RESTRICTION OF SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES.—"This would be desirable for the convenience and enjoyment of what may be an increasing number of non-smokers and it might ultimately contribute much to the discontinuance of smoking by altering social acceptance of the habit."

TAXATION.—After suggesting that increases in tobacco taxation might persuade many smokers to stop, the report says it seems unlikely that higher taxation would have "any lasting deterrent effect". A differential increase in taxation of cigarettes with a reduction of taxation on pipe and cigar tobacco might, however, persuade many cigarette smokers who can forsake the habit to change to safer forms of smoking.

and 50 per cent of women are regular smokers. Men who smoke cigarettes consume on an average 19 and women 11 cigarettes each day.

The report addresses a word finally to the doctors. On them, it is said, rests a special responsibility. "The doctor who smokes will inevitably lessen the effect of any campaign of public education concerning the consequence of the habit and will find it harder to help his patients who need to stop smoking."

The report, *Smoking and Health: A Report of the Royal College of Physicians on Smoking in Relation to Lung Cancer and Other Diseases*, is published by the Pitman Medical Publishing Co., Ltd., at 5s.

INVESTIGATORS TOOK THEIR OWN ADVICE

Five of the signatories to the report who faced a press conference at the Royal College of Physicians yesterday made clear their own smoking habits. Sir Robert Platt, President of the College, said that when they started they had two heavy cigarette smokers among them; now there was only one, or perhaps none. He gave up smoking in 1954, he said.

Of the other members of the investigating committee present Dr. J. N. Morris said he gave up smoking cigarettes after the evidence began to appear and now smoked two miniature cigars a day; Dr. J. A. Scott,



Sir Robert Platt, President of the Royal College of Physicians, speaking at the conference.

L.C.C. Medical Officer of Health, said he smoked a pipe; Dr. J. G. Scadding gave up smoking in 1945; and Dr. C. M. Fleicher, secretary of the committee, who used to smoke a pipe and cigars, said that in the past eight months he had smoked only three cigars.

But more than a third of their audience smoked cigarettes throughout the meeting.

LUNG CANCER

During his speech Sir Robert Platt said: "It is the cigarette smokers who get the cancer of the lung. Indeed, those who smoke 25 or 30 cigarettes a day have about 30 times the chance of dying of it than a non-smoker has. Of course you may say it is still only the minority, about one in eight, of heavy smokers who died of this disease, and this is true. But supposing you were offered a flight on an air line and you were told that usually only about one in eight of their aeroplanes crashed, you might think again."

There was also a big excess of deaths from other diseases in heavy smokers of cigarettes, he said, especially deaths from bronchitis and coronary thrombosis, and especially at the younger end of the middle-aged population. "So much so, that between the ages of 35 and 55 the death rate in heavy cigarette smokers is three to four times that in non-smokers."

He suggested three reasons for the reluctance to believe the facts—"first of all because we never like accepting unpleasant facts; secondly, because very big financial interests are involved... thirdly, and most importantly, many people who smoke cigarettes want to go on smoking."

REPORT CALLED INCOMPLETE

The Tobacco Manufacturers' Standing Committee stated yesterday that the evidence in the report "is well known and adds little to that quoted by the Medical Research Council in 1957".

The Royal College of Physicians' committee was set up to consider the effects on health of both smoking and air pollution. By deferring to a separate report their consideration of air pollution the committee had "produced an incomplete assessment of the problems involved."

CHURCH SITE AS A CAR PARK

COURT HEARS VICAR'S APPLICATION

Judgment was reserved by Mr. G. H. Newson, Q.C., deputy chancellor, at a London Diocesan Consistory Court yesterday on an application by the vicar and churchwardens of St. John's Church, Chelsea, for a faculty to use the blitzed site of the church as a car park.

Yesterday was the second day of the hearing. The court had been told that a petrol station was proposed for the blitzed vicarage site. Mr. E. Garth Moore, counsel for the applicants, said there was no question of petrol pumps being installed on consecrated ground.

One of the objectors, Mr. John Riley, of Meek Street, Chelsea, said he wished the church site to be made into a children's playground. He was prepared to finance the laying out of the site to the extent of £150 and to pay £100 a year towards its maintenance.

Another objector, Mr. Patrick Corbett, a member of Chelsea Borough Council, suggested that the site should be a playground for children aged from three to six years. Answering Mr. Garth Moore, he said: "I am objecting to the development of the site in the interests of petrol peddling."

SCHEDULED FOR SCHOOL

Opposition was also expressed by Mr. Arthur Bevis, owner of a garage and petrol station near the site. His objection, he said, was on commercial grounds, though he supported the idea of a playground.

The vicar, the Rev. Geoffrey Barber, who now holds services in a church hall, said the object of leasing the site as a car park was to obtain income. He thought there was no need for a playground at the site and it would not be consistent with the traffic using the road.

Mr. H. E. Ling, a churchwarden, said the church authorities were of opinion that to rebuild the church would not be justified. The land was scheduled for building a school by 1972. The Diocesan Advisory Committee had no objection to the scheme.

LEADERS' MESSAGES TO CANDIDATES

FROM OUR POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

Mr. Macmillan and Mr. Gaitskell published yesterday their personal messages to some of the candidates in the present by-elections. Mr. Macmillan took the opportunity to emphasize the importance of the imminent Geneva conference and the halting of "the ruinous arms race".

In a message to Mr. Norman Miscampbell, at Blackpool North, Mr. Macmillan wrote that the Government had consistently worked over the years for better international understanding. "All past experience, however, shows how disastrous it would be to take the short cut of indulging in one-sided unilateral disarmament, or to weaken in any way the balance of power which is essential to deter aggression."

To Mr. F. Wood, in Middlesbrough, East, Mr. Macmillan wrote that it would be no contribution to disarmament for Britain to weaken in any way the balance of power that is essential to deter aggression. Since the war peace had rested on the willingness of free people to bear the burden of maintaining adequate defences.

ECONOMIC RECORD

To Mr. Taverne, in Lincoln, Mr. Gaitskell wrote attacking the Government's economic record and commented that "lethargy, indifference and reliance on outworn methods and techniques have been the order of the day in all too many British industries." The Government's record abroad had been just as bad.

In his message to Dr. Shirley Sumnerskill, in Blackpool North, Mr. Gaitskell proposed measures that, he said, would make a tremendous change in the atmosphere at home and abroad. They included reform of the tax system to catch those who make money the easy way; firm action against the land price scandal; curbing monopolies; a Government drive to increase investment, research and efficiency in industry; half-pay on retention of firm support for the United Nations; and acceptance of the Monckton commission report on Central Africa.

MINISTER TALKS OF LABOUR "VOMIT"

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT BOURNEMOUTH, MARCH 7

Mr. Boyd-Carpenter, Minister of Pensions, told a conference of women Conservatives here today that the Labour Party were "back to their old vomit of pensioning."

"Regardless of the fact that pensions were raised to their highest level yet less than a year ago and that the real value of this pension in terms of what it will buy is today higher than ever has been before this last rise, they are starting a clamour about pensions" he said.

He said that what made this clamour more nauseating was that their own record in office made it clear that under a new Labour government the pensioner would fare very badly. "People have now learnt that the Socialists are only concerned about old people's pensions when they are in opposition. The Conservatives care for them when in office."

Mr. Boyd-Carpenter said they wanted to be increasingly selective in the way they disposed of the vast sums of money which the Government spent on social benefits. The complete universality of benefit that was probably essential for the

News in Brief

CLEAN SHEET.—For the first time in over 10 years no case of drunkenness was heard at Old Street Magistrates' Court, London, yesterday.

FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE.—Sir Frank Medicott has accepted the position of hon. treasurer to the Flying Doctor Service of Africa Ltd.

AIRMEN'S SOUNDPROOF FLATS.—A block of flats for aircrews and their families to be erected opposite London Airport is to consist of completely soundproof rooms and passages.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT COUNCILS.—Lady Albenarle has been appointed chairman of the National Youth Employment Council in place of Lord Coleraine, who is retiring from the post on March 31.

CRUSHED TO DEATH.—John Macdonald, aged 46, of Sydney Terrace, Edinburgh, first mate of the Liverpool motor vessel Broughly, died when he was crushed between the quayside and his ship at St. Helier, Jersey, yesterday.

COMMON MARKET COURSES.—Two-day residential courses for directors and executives on "The United Kingdom and the Common Market" are to be held at the Export Centre at Sundridge Park, Bromley, Kent. The first course begins on Monday.

CAMBRIDGE UNION POLL.—A further move towards allowing women into the Cambridge Union will be made today, when a poll will decide whether the three-quarter majority rule necessary for altering union rules should be changed to two-thirds.

RENT-FREE.—Tenants of a number of Coal Board houses in Armthorpe, near Doncaster, are to have nine weeks' free tenancy as compensation for damage to their houses during the past two years caused by faulty materials in the foundations.

DOCKERS' END STRIKE.—The 1,100 dockers at the cross-Channel quays in Belfast have been on strike since Monday decided yesterday to return to work this morning. The present system of employment of first and second preference dockers is to be reviewed.

GENERAL'S CAR OFFENCE.—Major-General Sir Richard Howard-Vyse, aged 78, of Stoke Place, Slough, Buckinghamshire, was fined £10 and ordered to pay five guineas advocate's fee after pleading Guilty at Slough Magistrates' Court yesterday to driving without due care and attention.

SECOND HUNGER STRIKE.—Mrs. Helen Alleganza, of the Committee of 100, who is in Holloway prison serving a 12 months' sentence imposed under the Official Secrets Act and last Friday went on a 48-hour hunger strike as a protest against the British nuclear test explosion in Nevada, is on her second hunger strike, a "meditative fast" linked with Ash Wednesday.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION.—The Queen has approved the appointment of Mr. Leslie Robert Missen to be a member of the Local Government Commission for England, in succession to the late Mr. E. W. Woodhead.

RESTRICTIONS TO END.—Restrictions on the movement and marketing of poultry in east Suffolk because of fowl pest are being withdrawn from midnight tomorrow, the Ministry of Agriculture announced yesterday.

V.T.O.L. SURFACE EROSION TESTS

FROM OUR AERONAUTICAL CORRESPONDENT

Rolls-Royce have made tests to ascertain the extent of the surface erosion problems of using separate jet-lift engines for V.T.O.L. and S.T.O.L. (vertical and short take-off and landing) aircraft. They found that lightweight aluminium plates pegged to the ground reduce the erosion of grassland, tarmac, and asphalt surfaces to negligible proportions during V.T.O.L.

An RB108 jet-lift engine, mounted on a gantry, was used. Erosion occurred with ordinary concrete because water contained in small cavities in the top surface boils in the heat of the exhaust gases. This can be overcome by "water curing". Wet sand is placed over the concrete surface immediately after laying, and left for about 15 days, so that the moisture does not evaporate off the newly laid surface. Such a surface has withstood, with no deterioration, engine running equivalent to over 200 jet-lift take-offs.

Tarmac and asphalt surfaces showed an unacceptable degree of erosion. Satisfactory results were obtained by using a 2½-inch diameter plate of light gauge aluminium with a circumferential lip, held to the ground by a single leg screw.

Simulated S.T.O.L. manoeuvres were made with an RB 108 engine mounted vertically in a Meteor aircraft. At speeds down to 10 knots no damage to tarmac or asphalt surfaces occurred. The results by two Rolls-Royce technicians, Mr. J. R. C. Fearon, deputy flight development engineer, and Mr. D. H. Norman, technical assistant, development department, in a paper published in the Royal Aeronautical Society Journal.

CALL FOR MEETING WITH DOMINIONS

The choice for Britain was whether to follow a policy of expanding Commonwealth trade as a first priority or to commit ourselves to a regional block in Europe, Lord Balfour of Inchrye told the annual meeting of the Greater London area council of the National Chamber of Trade last night.

"It is still not too late to bring together the great dominions in an effort to hammer out a revitalized Commonwealth policy," he said. "And then, as a Commonwealth, we can talk to Europe. It is still not too



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WEATHER FORECAST

An intense depression S.W. of the British Isles is not making much progress, and the cold air continues to circulate round an anticyclone to E. across much of the British Isles. Some N.E. areas, particularly in Scotland, will have bright periods, but weather will be mostly cloudy. Wales, the West Country and Northern Ireland will have some rain or sleet or possibly snow, but further E. any precipitation is likely to be of snow, perhaps turning to sleet or rain late in the day.

Forecasts for the period 6 a.m. to midnight.
LONDON AREA, S.E. and CENTRAL S.W. ENGLAND, S. WALES and MONMOUTHSHIRE.—Cloudy, likelihood of a period of snow, more particularly in the S., perhaps turning to sleet or rain later in the day; cold; maximum temp. 41°F (5°C); strong to gale force E. to S.E. wind.

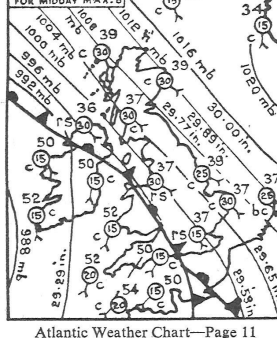
CHANNEL ISLANDS and S.W. ENGLAND.—Cloudy probably some sleet or rain at times, perhaps preceded in E. districts by a period of snow; cold; maximum temp. 43°F (6°C) in E. districts, 50°F (10°C) in W.; strong to gale south-easterlies will probably moderate.

EAST ANGLI, E. and W. MIDLANDS, N. WALES, ISLE of MAN and NORTHERN IRELAND.—Cloudy; chance of snow or sleet at times, perhaps turning to rain later; cold; maximum 43°F (6°C); strong to gale, south-easterlies.

E. N.W., CENTRAL N. and N.E. ENGLAND, LAKE DISTRICT, BORDERS, S.W. SCOTLAND, GLASGOW AREA and ARGYLE.—Probably cloudy but mainly dry; cold; maximum temp. 42°F (6°C); strong S.E. wind may reach gale force in exposed places.
OUTLOOK FOR TOMORROW.—Doubtful; milder air in the S.W. will probably make some progress N.E.

SEA PASSAGES

S. NORTH SEA.—Wind S.E., strong to gale; snow or sleet; visibility moderate to poor.
S.W. NORTH SEA.—Wind S.E., strong to gale; snow or sleet; visibility moderate to poor.
Straits of Dover and English Channel (E.).—Wind S.E., gale or severe gale; turning later S.W., fresh to strong; sleet or rain; visibility moderate; sea rough.
S. GEORGE'S CHANNEL and IRISH SEA.—Wind S.E.; severe gale, turning later S.W., strong; rain or sleet; visibility moderate; sea rough.



Atlantic Weather Chart—Page 11

Sun rises, 6.31 a.m.; sets, 5.52 p.m.
Moon rises: 7.49 a.m. Moon sets: 8.44 p.m.
First quarter, March 13.
Lighting-up time, 6.22 p.m.
High water at London Bridge, 2.58 a.m. and 3.30 p.m.; Dover, 12.3 a.m. and 12.28 p.m.
London (Kew).—Temperature: Maximum, day (6 a.m. to 6 p.m.), 41°F, 5°C; minimum, night (6 p.m. Tuesday to 6 a.m.), 28°F, -2°C. Rainfall (24 hours to 6 p.m.), nil.
Dew-point (at mean sea level) at 6 p.m., 48°F, 9°C.

St. Peter's, Vere Street: Rev. M. G. Peppiatt, 12.05 and 1.10. St. Olave's, Hart Street: Rev. Maurice Dean, 1.5. City Temple: Rev. D. A. Greeves, 1.15. St. Martin-in-the-Fields: Rev. Kenneth Gibbons, 1.15. St. Giles-in-the-Fields: Rev. G. C. Taylor, 1.25. St. Mary's, Bryanston Square: Institution and induction of Very Rev. Martin Sullivan as rector, 8.
Covent Garden Opera House: Alcina, 7.30.
Funeral: Commander A. F. Bone, Church Army Headquarters church, Upper Berkeley Street, 11.
Memorial service: Major-General W. S. Tope, St. Margaret's, Buxted, Sussex, 2.30.
Requiem: Mr. Gerald Russell, Brompton Oratory, 12.30.

WHERE THERE'S SMOKE

A committee of the Royal College of Physicians of London have now reviewed the evidence bearing on the relationship between smoking and cancer of the lung, considered alternative interpretations of the evidence, and recommended certain lines of action for doctors and public authorities. With the committee's main and emphatic conclusion—that there is a causal connexion between smoking, particularly heavy cigarette smoking, and cancer—few impartial readers of the report are likely to disagree. Like all scientific hypotheses this one has only probability. It both awaits confirmation and is open to the possibility of disproof. The evidence supporting it is chiefly statistical but there attaches to it a high degree of probability; and probability, as BISHOP BUTLER noted, is for us the very guide of life. The rational man will, if he values his health, avoid becoming, or cease to be, a heavy smoker of cigarettes.

But where is the rational man? It is only too easy not to accept the most probable explanation of the facts, or at least not to act in conformity with such acceptance. The tobacco manufacturers, for instance, have an interest in dissuading people from jumping to the obvious conclusion so long as any other conclusion remains open: hence their reminders about other possible interpretations of the evidence and their emphasis on the present gaps in the aetiology of cancer. The chain smoker may choose to console himself with the reflection that the bulk of the evidence is statistical and that "statistics can be made to prove anything". The thoughts of the schoolboy who is in the process of contracting the habit are far removed from mortality. Meanwhile there is the steady pressure of social imitation and ubiquitous advertising.

Since rationality—that is, assent to probability and action consistent with that assent—cannot be assumed to rule the conduct of people at large, should the public authorities, and in particular the Government, step in and try to impose it? The physicians' committee think so, up to a point. They do not recommend legal prohibition—which would be neither acceptable nor justified nor enforceable. They do suggest among other things restrictions on tobacco advertising and differential taxation designed to make smoking habits conform more closely to a sensible evaluation of the risks. There are precedents for both courses. Yet it is doubtful whether the effects of the measures proposed would be the effects desired, and whether the Government would be justified in the present state of knowledge in entering the arena in that way. The general proposition that smoking is a causal factor in lung cancer is sound enough, but the nature of the connexion is too little understood to form the basis of legislative prescriptions. What the Government could and should do is throw their weight behind a campaign to bring the facts and their most likely interpretation before the minds of the public. The physicians' committee shrewdly observed that the Government's present attitude of near neutrality makes it easier for people to persuade themselves that the whole thing is a scare.

The Office Octopus

The need for a really vigorous policy for the location of offices in the metropolis is as obvious as its absence at present. To be fair, what has been achieved in central London by planning controls in recent years has been far from negligible: it is only necessary, to appreciate this, to imagine what would have happened without zoning, plot ratios and the like. Not should

unanimous satisfaction felt by the companies at the move is impressive.

Not all companies could consider moving their offices, even in part, and it would be unrealistic to expect spectacular migration among the rest unless the carrot of savings in costs is reinforced by strong disincentives to staying in the City and West End. On the strength of the report of their study group the Town and Country Planning Association offer their own recommendations as to how more effective control might be achieved. They suggest, for example, that the right to increase the cubic content by 10 per cent on rebuilding should be withdrawn. Whether this alone would retard office growth sufficiently is doubtful. The abolition of the cube rule altogether and its replacement by one preventing increases in floor space might well be preferable.

There must also be some scepticism about the idea of quota systems for office development. Familiar industrial development certificates do not provide a wholly encouraging precedent. But there certainly is scope for more tightly defining office zones in the development plans and for reclaiming residential buildings "temporarily" used as offices. A case can doubtless also be made for special levies, rates, or even a payroll tax for London, as it can for the revival of development charges. But could a Conservative Minister of Housing be expected to have the courage to grasp any of these nettles? Only last month the CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER said he would not reintroduce building controls on new office buildings in London. The outcome of the present review of the problem will be awaited with impatience and interest.

How to Keep Scientists

There is an obvious and urgent need for a reappraisal of the Government's organization for dealing with civil science. The existing arrangements are inadequate for the present tempo of research. It is reasonable to hope that something constructive will emerge from the review of the subject which LORD HAILSHAM told the House of Lords yesterday the Government had decided to carry out. It will be managed by the Treasury and the study will be mainly concerned with issues of administrative organization and the machinery of government; but this domestic committee will also take full account of the views expressed by the Advisory Council on Scientific Policy and the opinions of scientists inside and outside the public services.

This is all very well. To it must be added the hope that a report will be published after the conclusion of the review. The general view among scientists is that research in the universities is not having the support it deserves. The University Grants Committee determines the allocation of grants on a five-year basis; this is thought to be too inflexible a system, and ill adjusted to the needs of today—even with ad hoc assistance by the research councils. What is needed is a more general appraisal of the needs of science in the national interest. Too many British scientists are leaving for America—not only because of greater financial reward but more often for the enhanced facilities that are so readily made available to them there.

Tariff Concessions

The marathon tariff conference of signatories of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade which started in August, 1960, is still not over. But the American Government decided to break tradition and announce the results of its bilateral negotiations with the United Kingdom and with the European Economic Community, which are complete. According to the Gatt practice all concessions made by the two parties to each other in a bilateral negotiation apply in their trade with other members of Gatt by reason of the "most favoured nation clause". Hence Britain will enjoy the concessions made by the United States and the E.E.C. to each other—and the E.E.C. will enjoy the benefits of concessions made between Britain and the United States.

There are further complexities. Since Britain makes special concessions to Commonwealth and European Free Trade Area countries, the Gatt

25 or 33 per cent. The United States will levy only 6½ per cent on motor cars; but many of her tariffs are high, notably those on chemicals. It is easy to understand why PRESIDENT KENNEDY, seeing the risks to American trade with Europe (especially if Britain enters the E.E.C.), wishes to have powers to negotiate still more drastic tariff cuts. It is a policy which has Britain's full support, and is of the utmost importance if Europe's economic integration is to be compatible with growing world prosperity.

Bricks

When he was asked, in the course of a recent television interview, whether the agonizing blunders which he used to depict so poignantly were now things of the past, MR. H. M. BATEMAN seemed to suggest that he rather thought that they were. Nowadays, in his view, everything is much more free and easy. Anyone can get away with anything. It would be comforting to be quite certain that he is right. After all, it must still be pretty galling to drop a rifle on a full-dress parade—even if sergeant-majors and commanding officers are more restrained in their reactions than they used to be; and objects other than rifles—social bricks, for example—can still produce an ugly clatter when they fall. As he has grown older MR. BATEMAN may sensibly have tended to take a decreasingly serious view of life's minor pitfalls.

For a shy young man such pitfalls can loom very large indeed. Achieving an air shot, for instance, at the start of a round of golf with the games-loving head of the firm that he has just joined; discovering, when he goes up to change for dinner on his first evening at a strange house, that he has forgotten to pack a pair of black socks; attending a dance under the misapprehension that the guests were expected to turn up in fancy dress. It takes considerable courage, even today, to laugh off that second shot on the first tee, those obtrusively puce woollen socks, and that straw skirt and conscientiously blackened face.

Older people can afford to smile at past embarrassments of this kind; but even an elderly man can wake up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat of fear and humiliation caused by a suspicion, suddenly borne in upon him, that he has made the most frightful ass of himself. That story he had told at dinner had seemed to go down rather well. He had recounted it as a personal experience, everyone else round the table had stopped talking to listen, and there had been a satisfying tribute of laughter. But had his host joined in? And was not the story, now he came to think of it, one that this self-same host had told him, only a day or two before at luncheon at the club, as having happened to him?

POSTS IN THE NEW COUNTRIES

Sir.—Your leader on Posts in the New Countries, and Dr. Kenneth Hill's letter on February 28, prompts us to refer to a health activity to which we have recently given a new Commonwealth orientation.

Every year or two since the beginning of the century, we have organized in London, or some other provincial city in Britain, a large health conference, open to the public, and since the last war these meetings—renamed "Commonwealth Conferences"—have attracted a number of overseas visitors. This year, for the first time, we are taking the conference overseas. By invitation of the Nigerian Government and University College, Ibadan, our meeting will be held in the University, and we expect some 300 delegates from different parts of the world.

Several of the chairmen of sessions and leading speakers will be Africans. Health authorities, medical schools, and individual doctors in the United Kingdom are supporting us nobly.

This conference will constitute a two-way traffic in ideas. To Africa we shall present our own longer experience in preventive medicine. From Africans, we shall learn much about the same diseases as seen in less highly developed countries. As Dr. Kenneth Hill rightly says, we need more of this kind of intellectual exchange in medicine, as in other ways.

Yours faithfully,

IVY PORTLAND, Chairman of Council.

N. LLOYD RUSBY, Vice-chairman of Council.

HARLEY WILLIAMS, Secretary-General.

The Chest and Heart Association, Tavistock House North, Tavistock Square, W.C.1.

SACRIFICE OF TRIMMINGS

Sir.—Mr. Alexander Walker's letter in your issue of today raises an interesting point, but I think he is being unnecessarily pessimistic. From my experience of travelling in western European countries (last

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Sir.—Most your stricture "Out of Cont the contrast b promises on p actual perform spending is ou promise was without unde in Governm therefore neve

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Sir.—The 1 development c Britain's entry entertained by be exaggerated

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