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£50 Bonuses for Doctors

31 AUG. 1935

Govt. Retreats From An Untenable Position Palliative, But Does Not Solve Hospital Problem

(By "The Mail" Special Investigator)

Bonuses of £50 will be paid by the Government to each of the 11 remaining house surgeons at the Adelaide Hospital on completion of a year's service at the hospital.

These payments will not adequately recompense the doctors for the long hours of overwork and heavy burden of responsibility they have shouldered so loyally for months. Nor will they provide a permanent solution to the problem of the serious understaffing of the hospital—which has made it difficult to give to all patients the attention necessary for their well-being.

Satisfaction will, however, be felt that the responsible Ministers have been compelled by the weight of public opinion to retreat from an untenable position and to recognise the justice of the resident medical staff's complaints.

THE Acting Premier (Sir George Ritchie) declined today to discuss the conditions at the hospital. He liked his Saturday afternoon of the same as anyone else, he said. Information concerning the bonus plan was obtained from other sources.

It is believed that the attitude of the house surgeons will be that, while the bonuses will be acceptable, they will not solve the shortage of resident medical aid at the hospital. In the absence of a more constructive policy it is likely to become an annual problem.

The doctors are concerned for those who will succeed them and for the welfare of the hospital. These were the considerations that caused them to break their long silence and issue the reasoned statement that the apathy of the Government was largely responsible for the existing serious situation.

Because that the staffing of the hospital would be solved by more general recruitment was given today by Dr. D. Stewart, the most recent of the resident house surgeons to resign. She left for the Melbourne express tonight on her way to Europe, where she will take post-graduate studies.

Dr. Stewart, who has been at the Adelaide Hospital for four months, said that her departure would have been prevented if there had been some prospect of relief from the almost unbearable working conditions, and if the salary had been more attractive.

"Suggestion Sound"

A member of the teaching staff of the University said that the suggestion of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine for a salary of £150 for first year surgeons, with a bonus of £50 at the end of 12 months, was sound.

Similar advice had been given to the Government from various sources in the last year.

He said it would be quite impracticable for the honorary staff to carry out the duties of the resident medical staff as had been suggested. Adequate salaries would solve the problem.

It would be more reasonable to give Adelaide house surgeons a bonus than to pay the fares of doctors from England.

A doctor said today that there would almost certainly be strong opposition from the rank and file of the British Medical Association to the importation of doctors as the profession was already overcrowded in Australia.

Should a proposal that doctors in private practice for several hours a week do work now assigned to the overworked resident staff be adopted by the Government, no argument would remain against increasing the house surgeons' salaries. The stopgap system would be more expensive than what medical authorities and the house surgeons claim would be a permanent solution.

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KEEN INTEREST IN EXHIBITS

UNIVERSITY authorities estimate that between 2,000 and 3,000 people attended the exhibition sessions of the exhibition being staged by the Adelaide Medical School as part of its jubilee celebrations. The Governor (Sir Winston Dugan) was present and showed a keen interest in the exhibits and demonstrations. The exhibition traces the advances made by the medical profession during its first 50 years of establishment in this State.

To help visitors to understand some of the technicalities with which the exhibition bristles placards in the "lay tongue" are displayed prominently. The way of the uninitiated is also made easier by students who act as demonstrators.

Most visitors to the exhibition are like Kipling's elephant—"with an insatiable curiosity"; and "insist on looking at everything." Often it is mere curiosity, and they neglect the scientific side of the display. Others, however, are interested in the modern operating theatre apparatus. He gazed anxiously at a case of amputation knives (about the same size as a bread knife). He asked in a tremulous voice—"What do they take out your appendix with?"

On being shown an ordinary small scalpel he appeared to be very relieved, and walked off smiling.

DEADLY GERMS

The pathology and bacteriology department attract many visitors, but they do not seem impressed with the dishes of deadly "anthrax" and T.B. germs, until told by a demonstrator that there is enough material there to kill most of the population of Australia!

The credulity of the public is tested by a slide displaying a piece of the stomach of Napoleon. Another slide depicts a piece of a blood vessel of Pharaoh. This, no doubt, is a tribute to the skill of the Egyptian embalmers.

However, these specimens are authentic, and were presented by Sir Arthur Keith, the English scientist, to Dr. E. Angus Johnson, Adelaide City Health Officer.

News 6-9-35
31 AUG. 1935
ACTION TO STRENGTHEN HOSPITAL STAFF
8 SEP. 1935
Cabinet Plans Announced

SALARY POINT

To overcome the present shortage of medical staff at the Adelaide Hospital the Government is now seeking local doctors to go into residence at the hospital. Inquiries are also being made in Victoria and New South Wales in an effort to secure house surgeons.

If salaries higher than those paid at present are necessary to secure additional house surgeons, then house surgeons at present in residence will have their pay raised to a similar level.

IN an official announcement of these moves, following consultation with other Cabinet Ministers today, the Acting Premier (Sir George Ritchie) explained that the Government has been previously assured that the position at the hospital would be met by the employment of six medical students at the end of the year. That expectation "as tried, but had not proved as successful as anticipated."

"Nevertheless the service rendered by the students is greatly appreciated by the Government," said Sir George.

"In addition to inquiries which have been and still are being made by the Government, the dean of the faculty of medicine at the University is making inquiries in Victoria and New South Wales with a view to securing house surgeons."

Temporary Measure

The Minister stated that he had instructed the Inspector-General of Hospitals to ascertain if there are any "locum tenens" available to go into residence at the Adelaide Hospital, and if so, to engage any suitable doctors, merely as a temporary measure to overcome the present shortage and to give relief to the present staff.

Sir George said that any increased salary payable to additional house surgeons would also be paid to the house surgeons at present in residence.

The superintendent of the Adelaide Hospital has consented to forgo his visit to Melbourne to attend the medical conference, as it is impossible for him to be spared at the present time, concluded the statement.