

NEWSPAPER PAGE AT HOSPITAL CASES SUR

FARES FROM ENGLAND

Warnings Not Heeded, Says Leader of Opposition

Would Receive £100 A Year Here

NEED FOR PROMPT ACTION

FARES ONE WAY

Public dismay has been caused by the official admission that although members of the resident medical staff at the Adelaide Hospital work for 100 hours a week, they still find it impossible to attend adequately to all patients.

"WILL the Acting Premier inform the House of the number of medical men the Government is seeking in England to join the staff of the Adelaide Hospital, the salary being offered, whether passages are to be paid by the Government, and the cost of such passages?" Mr. Condon (A.L.P.) asked Sir George Ritchie in the Legislative Council this afternoon.

The general feeling expressed today was that the statement by the resident medical staff had put the Government hopelessly in the wrong, and that any further attempts to substitute word spinning for action would damage its credit seriously.

In reply the Acting Premier said that the Government had not stipulated any number, but had only inquired how many students or house surgeons were obtainable. The Government would then decide the number required after replies had been received. The salary offered was £100 a year. Passages would be paid from England to Australia one way only.

The acting Premier (Sir George Ritchie) today conferred for more than two hours with the Inspector-General of Hospitals (Dr. Morris). Later he declined to discuss conditions at the hospital.

Sir George said that in New South Wales £90 a year was paid, with a bonus of £20 if the full year were completed. He understood that many house surgeons there left if better inducements offered, and in such cases, where the year was not completed, only £50 was paid.

"If the warnings repeatedly given some time ago had been heeded by the Government the alarming position now revealed could have been avoided," commented the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Lacey).

an adequate medical and nursing staff. "I am sure that when the facts are pointed out to the Government it will do everything in its power to remedy the trouble."

"It is further evidence of the weakness of the Government in failing to safeguard the interests of the public."

Mr. Cain emphasized that it was particularly necessary that accident cases admitted to the casualty wards should receive immediate and qualified attention.

"Notwithstanding the acting Premier's statement that doctors are being sought in other parts of Australia the serious position at the hospital cannot be overlooked. Members of the Opposition have complained about the shortage of staff for several weeks.

Although patients probably would not suffer, because doctors always do their job conscientiously to the best of their ability, it is a very severe strain, both physically and mentally, on doctors when they are called upon to do so much extra work," said Rev. G. N. White, of Norwood.

"The question should be remedied immediately as in addition to the health of the patients, the position of the doctors themselves provides a serious problem. They are being seriously overworked in being on duty for 100 or more hours a week. They cannot stand up to that strain and before long they will be unable to carry on. Unless prompt action is taken there will be a state of chaos, and this nobody wants to see."

"No doctor should have to work as much as 100 hours a week, and it is not fair to expect 11 men to perform duties that normally should be done by at least 20," he added. "Such a state of affairs should not be allowed to continue. If the allowance were increased I think more young doctors would offer their services to the hospital."

"Shocking Wages"

"The Government must act, and act promptly, if it wishes to meet the serious position which has arisen at the Adelaide Hospital and if it wishes to retain public confidence. The P. W. Wilson said today.

There must be something very wrong when so many young doctors were attracted to other States, said the president of the Housewives' Association (Mrs. W. Evans Hardy). The salaries paid at the Adelaide Hospital should be sufficiently large to encourage doctors to remain at the hospital."

"The doctors have been paid nothing for some time and the hours they have worked have created conditions that are as near to sweating as you can get. It is outrageous that after the subject has gone through such a training they should receive only £100 a year."

It was deplorable that young medical men trained in Adelaide were compelled to leave the State. Doctors in the other States were better paid, and it was essential that the situation here should be remedied.

"Even when young ministers go to the States, they are given £150 a year. Unless the parent buys him a practice, a young doctor cannot possibly hope to save more than £100 a year."

Suggestion is Sound

He said that the suggestion made by the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University for a salary of £150, with a bonus of £50 for resident medical officers, was sound. Similar advice had been given to the Government from various sources during the past year.

"The Government should not hesitate to increase the salaries immediately. So much depends upon the service the doctors are rendering, yet they are fearfully underpaid."

It would be quite impracticable for honoraries to carry out the duties of the resident medical staff as had been suggested.

"Surely the authorities must now realize the seriousness of the position at the hospital," said Mr. Robinson (Ind. Workooora), who brought the subject before the Government in the Assembly.

"The Government is talking of bringing medical officers from England and paying their passages. Would it not be more reasonable to give our house surgeons a bonus which would be equivalent to the fare the Government would have to pay?"

"It is clear that the institution is not only seriously understaffed now, but has been for a considerable time. That is not fair to the public or to the staff. It is appalling to think that doctors are actually working under 'sweated' conditions, and are not even receiving the basic wage. They are forced to work under long hours in responsible positions. The young members of the staff do not get any opportunity to study the work of leading professional men who visit the hospital."

"No difficulty could be found in staffing the hospital if adequate payments were made," the University authority said. "In any case, the profession is already crowded in Australia and it would surely be very short-sighted policy for the Government to import men from Great Britain to fill junior positions here."

Mr. Mowbray—Is it true that the students are working 100 hours a week? The Acting Premier—I cannot say whether they are working 100 or 120, but they are overworked because they are understaffed.

CABLE MESSAGE TO LONDON

Sir George added that the Government had received no application from the house surgeons at the hospital for an increase in their salaries. In reply to an interjection, he said that he had not acted arbitrarily. Further information had been sought on the question of obtaining doctors or students from abroad in a cable message sent to London on Saturday. The Government had been reluctant to do this in the interests of the students at the University but the urgency of the position had necessitated inquiries being made in England.

The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine had stated that he thought that the hospital for nothing. Sir George added that he had been obtained would overcome the difficulty.

"These students do not go into the hospital for nothing. Sir George added that they will receive £90 a year in remuneration for the work they will do."

FULL INQUIRY URGED

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Mr. Lacey's Speech

Mr. Lacey urged the Government to consider the relations between the Inspector-General of Hospitals (Dr. Morris) and the honorary staff of the hospital. He said that if strained relations existed, they might be at the expense of the unfortunate patients, and that full inquiries should be made if there were any friction.

Mr. Lacey said that the proposal to import doctors from overseas was wrong. There were sufficient medical men in Australia already, but they seemed to be wrongly distributed at the expense of South Australia. He did not think that importations many years ago had resulted in smooth working.

The payment of doctors' salaries was a very small item, about 2 per cent. of the total, compared with the total expense of running the hospital. Medical aid was the most important function of the hospital. Although much work was done by the honorary staff more should be paid by the Government to the resident staff.

"The statement by the Chief Secretary that higher pay at the Adelaide Hospital would create a vicious circle of intense competition had been shown to be ridiculous by a leading doctor."

The Leader of the Opposition called for a full and complete inquiry into adequate salaries and more attractive conditions at the hospital.

The debate is proceeding.

Meeting of L.C.P. Tomorrow

Members of the Parliamentary L.C.P. were today notified that a party meeting would be held tomorrow—the first for three weeks.

The notice did not indicate the nature of the business to be discussed.