

in the United States. The group is anxious that there should be a continuing organization to promote cooperation in medical research in the hope that this will lead eventually to a coordination of arrangements for medical education. The plan is now to be presented to the European Commission as well as to governments of member nations. With luck, the outcome could be a valuable European institution for medical research and practice, and a precedent which other disciplines might follow as well.

Although the Treaty of Rome embodies the pious hope that qualified doctors should be allowed to practise where they choose within the European Community, experience so far has been discouraging, to say the best of it. Not merely have the official organizations which register doctors in practice been slow to take a lead from the Treaty of Rome, but there remain wide differences of practice and procedure between the different European countries. And it will be some years before doctors brought up to work within, say, the British National Health Service will be able without the greatest difficulty to find themselves jobs in France or Italy. Not merely do conditions of work and the available facilities vary enormously from one country to another, but patients have different expectations. Yet, as the group of European medical professors points out, the persistence of these differences is a symptom of the complacency and conservatism from which European medicine as a whole now suffers. More mobility of qualified doctors, even at the level of general practice, would help to put an end to chauvinistic smugness. As things are, however, there is very little prospect that the systems of public health now operated by individual governments will be harmonized, as they should be, or even that there will be agreement within the foreseeable future on such mundane matters as the standardization of medical statistics. And opportunities for pooling specialized talents in hospitals and medical schools are at present forgone for lack of what should be the free and easy mobility not merely of medical people but of their patients.

What is to be done? The European Biomedical Research and Education Programme has taken the view that it will be easiest to bring about a full coordination of European medicine by concentrating on research and teaching. Few will doubt the accuracy of this conclusion, but there will be many reservations about the programme's diagnosis of present troubles, at least so far as the American influence on European medicine is concerned. The programme's documents argue that in present circumstances European researchers are dependent for the flow of information or innovation on visits to the United States, on American publications and on the publication of their own original research in the American scientific press. The argument continues that "the overwhelming influence of the vast American research community sets the standards of excellence in science". It goes on to hold that there is for practical purposes "an intellectual dependence" of European research on the "American scientific establishment" with the result that European doctors and researchers think first of buying American and not European equipment, that European biomedical industries are hampered, that insufficient use is made of opportunities for sharing expertise on a European basis and that European biomedical research and education are in some sense emasculated by the

dominance of the American scientific community. To some extent, of course, these complaints are descriptions of the truth. The fallacy in making so much of them is that the programme of development now put forward is in danger of putting the cart before the horse. It is unthinkable that European medical research and practice will be able to stand on equal terms with the American until European governments, separately and collectively, are willing to spend resources on a scale comparable with that now established in the United States.

The specific suggestions for reform now put forward are a modest beginning, but only that. The programme would make an inventory of biomedical research in Europe in the hope of alerting research workers to expertise available on their own doorsteps. It has sensible suggestions for research fellowships, postgraduate and postdoctoral, on a European basis and a scheme for mounting research colloquia on a European basis. More distantly, it wants to see collaboration on the production of textbooks and instructional materials but says nothing, at this stage, about the development of a common European curriculum in medicine. And, of course, there is at this stage, quite understandably, no specific proposal for the removal of the barriers which exist at present to the movement of people within the medical profession from one part of Europe to another. With the best will in the world, that task will be the most difficult of all. Yet, however slow the professional organizations may be, the European Biomedical Research and Education Programme has hit on the only hopeful starting point—the notion that universities and medical schools can on their own initiative do a great deal to set the scene changing.

100 Years Ago



OUR NATIONAL INDUSTRIES

IT is believed by many scientific men that research is all but dead in England. Whether we confess it or not, England, so far as the advancement of knowledge goes, is but a third or fourth-rate power. It is not our present purpose to inquire into the causes of all this; whether, as some say, it is because our professors are so rich, or whether, as others affirm, because all arrangements for the increase of knowledge are so poor, but rather to call attention to the certain influence of this on the wealth—let us put it in the most sordid manner—of the nation in the future.

Surely if scientific men are convinced, first, that the future of our national industries depends upon research, and secondly, that there is no research, the time has arrived when action of some sort is incumbent upon them if they are ever to take action in any subject whatever; for it is perfectly obvious that any bettering of such a state of things can only proceed from the action of the scientific men themselves.

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