

REGISTRAR GENERAL'S STATISTICAL REVIEWS OF ENGLAND AND WALES

THE "Medical Text" volume of the "Registrar General's Statistical Review of England and Wales for the two years 1948-49"* is presented in its usual form and provides a commentary on the figures already published in Part 1 of the "Review" for these years. Points of general interest concern the general death-rate, infant mortality, tuberculosis and cancer. The civilian crude death-rate reached a record low level of 11.0 per 1,000 in 1948 (it rose to 11.8 per 1,000 in 1949), partly because of the unusually low rates recorded in the first two quarters of the year. This in turn was due to the remarkable absence of influenza during those quarters. An extensive discussion of the trend of the infant mortality-rates during the past forty-four years shows that the long-term tendency for rates of mortality in the later parts of the first year of life to improve more rapidly than the neo-natal rates has continued. Regional disparities have remained remarkably constant; Greater London showed a greater improvement in 1949 over 1938 than did the North of England and Wales. The greater decline in Greater London was shown in the 'postnatal' rates only, the improvement in the neo-natal rate being very uniform as between the various regions. It is also demonstrated that the social class differential in the infant mortality-rate widened between 1939 and 1949. The postnatal rate for unskilled occupations was 3.8 times as high as the rate for professional occupations in 1939, and 4.4 times as high in 1949. The regional and social class differentials are, of course, closely interconnected. Mortality from tuberculosis began to decline rapidly in 1948. The figures for 1948 and 1949 show a marked shift in the age distribution of mortality from respiratory diseases among males. There was, in fact, an increase in mortality among males aged sixty-five and over in contrast to the great decline at the age range of fifteen to fifty-four. No such shift is shown in female mortality from this cause. The crude death-rate from cancer continued to rise in 1948 and 1949, but the downward trend among women aged thirty-five to seventy-four continued. The contribution of cancer of the lung to the increase in male cancer mortality is discussed. The 'lung' rate among males rose from 866 per million living in the age-range fifty-five to sixty-four during 1940-44 to 1,637 per million in 1949. The extent to which changes in diagnosis may have contributed to the apparent increase in the incidence of cancer of the lung is somewhat inconclusively discussed.

The "Medical Tables" volume, Part 1, for 1951† shows a rise in the crude death-rate to 12.5 per 1,000, partly as a result of the influenza epidemic in the first quarter. Influenza directly caused more deaths than did tuberculosis in this year. The decline in mortality from tuberculosis continued. The number of deaths from this cause in 1951 was 40 per cent lower than that in 1949. The number of deaths from cancer again increased, and accounted for 16 per cent of all deaths in the year.

* The Registrar General's Statistical Review of England and Wales for the two years 1948-49: Text, Medical. Pp. vii+370. (London: H.M.S.O., 1953.) 10s. net.

† The Registrar General's Statistical Review of England and Wales for the year 1951: Tables, Part 1, Medical. Pp. x+474. (London: H.M.S.O., 1953.) 12s. 6d. net.

AMERICAN ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN 1953

DESPITE widespread belief to the contrary, Prof. Preston Slosson thinks that the average American professor is one of the freest individuals in the world (*Univ. Rev.*, 26, No. 1; October 1953).

There are four levels on which the American professor is open to attack: the Federal Government, the State Government, the administrative authorities of his own institution and 'pressure groups' with no official status.

The immense publicity attending certain recent investigations by Congressional committees has attracted most attention to the Federal Government, although the actual threat to freedom is least from this source. Congress, like most legislative bodies, has the right to conduct inquiries and investigations into almost any matter which might conceivably become a subject of eventual legislation. This power, in itself, is salutary and useful. Unfortunately, committee investigations have not been surrounded with the legal protections which have been developed for court trials, and questions can be asked at random, no matter how irrelevant or full of false implication. Yet, except for the effect on the professor's reputation, the congressional committee has no power to penalize.

At the State-level, there is quite a variety of educational institutions controlled by State laws and State officials; these include State universities.

The chief power of the State legislature is the power of the purse. The power of rule is almost always in the hands of a board of regents, or a similar body, chosen by appointment or by election to represent the State. Most of them are business or professional men who delegate the details of management to a president, who heads the entire university, and to deans, who head individual colleges or schools within it. The president and the deans, in turn, consult the faculty committees. If the regents are not satisfied with the way things are going, they can change presidents. Full professors, and usually associate professors, have "tenure", that is, contracts guaranteeing permanent employment; younger men are employed for periods of a year or more at a time. Even a professor with tenure can be removed for "sufficient cause" after "due process".

Private colleges and universities are managed in much the same way, except that they are governed by boards of trustees, elected by the alumni, instead of by State-chosen officials. Except for a few academic tragedies of a purely personal sort, there would be few cases of heresy hunting were it not for clamour from angry alumni, parents, taxpayers, and organized pressure groups.

This fourth level is therefore the significant one. Popular clamour has, in times past, been directed at many targets. The only peculiarity of the present situation is that most of the intolerance runs in the single direction of Communists and their alleged sympathizers. Yet in California, where many professors were dismissed for refusing to take a special anti-Communist oath, the State courts ultimately vindicated their stand and held that the requirement was unlawful. The American Association of University Professors has noted no significant increase in the number of professors removed from their posts in recent years, although a few such cases do occur.