

be hammered in even further by the BMA's decision to withdraw its members from NHS committees, and to hold a referendum to discover whether its members would be prepared to resign from the health service if the government does not set up another committee with similar powers to those of the Kindersley Committee. The Junior Hospital Doctors, who are also anxious to see another review body instituted, believe that it is unrealistic to expect doctors to turn down a pay offer of £56 million which is already in the bank, just because the other £28 million is under review. In any case, there are signs that the BMA's militant stand, in refusing to sign sickness certificates, will lose doctors much public sympathy, which is the BMA's most powerful weapon if it is to play election politics.

The only way out of the dispute, it seems, is for the government to work out, with the BMA, fresh machinery for negotiating salaries. Neither the BMA nor the Junior Hospital Doctors Association will be happy until such machinery is hammered out. The uproar which has surrounded the government's decision to refer the Kindersley report to the PIB means that, if a similar body were to be set up, doctors could never be entirely convinced that the same thing would not happen again.

NUTRITION

Health and Deficiency

THE problem of vitamin deficiency is no longer of the same magnitude as it was when 40 per cent of the Japanese Navy had beriberi, when pellagra was the scourge of the southern states of the USA, when rickets affected the children of unlit slums, and armies and explorers succumbed to scurvy. But malnutrition through a lack of an adequate protein-calorie diet is still widespread and this problem will not be solved simply by the discovery of trace factors or education in the preparation of food. The World Health Organization, in a study designed to coincide with the occasion of the Second World Food Congress this year, has reviewed progress in the countering of malnutrition (*Conquest of Deficiency Diseases*, Aykroyd, W. R.; WHO, 1970. 18s).

There has been a great change in the pattern and politics of malnutrition. Vitamin deficiency was once prevalent everywhere but protein-calorie deficit is the problem almost exclusively of underdeveloped nations whereas advanced countries now have the capacity in principle to remedy it. It is, of course, not simply a question of overcoming political impediments to the release of available stores of high protein food, nor even of organizing suitable channels of priorities in its distribution. More needs to be known about the synergism between infection and malnutrition in the aetiology of certain diseases. And there will always be problems for administrators regarding the amounts of trace elements in water supplies, the statutory levels of vitamins added to "fortify" bread, milk or margarine, and so on.

The WHO publication is almost more interesting for what is excluded from the survey than for what it includes. Fluoridation and dental caries is a subject left well alone although the characteristics of the problem closely resemble those associated with endemic goitre arising from local lack of iodine—a topic which is considered. Alcoholism is felt to be of too little

importance to public health to merit a discussion of its part in the aetiology of deficiency disease. And it was a pity to exclude from the definition of malnutrition those categories of illness arising from over-indulgence—these are destined increasingly to occupy the attention of nutritionists in years to come.

EDUCATION

School Fees and GNP

by our Education Correspondent

THE cost of education in most countries has grown more rapidly during the past ten years than gross national product. This has focused considerable attention on how to plan educational growth so as to gain the maximum economic and social advantage from national education policies, a problem that preoccupied a conference organized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris last week.

The conference sought to predict the chief policy problems for its member countries over the next ten years, and it took place against the background of the OECD ministerial meeting held two weeks previously, which set a target of 65 per cent for the average increase in gross national product of the member countries by 1980. The 1960s saw education budgets grow on average by about 10 per cent a year, and if this rate is carried over into the 1970s, education will take an even larger share of the gross national product of OECD member countries than it does now. The growth in the 1960s took place chiefly in secondary and junior schools, and the greatest pressure for expansion now lies in the universities.

The British education system stands at the critical stage when the scale of expansion in terms of student numbers has been worked out, but the best way to achieve the expansion is still the chief debating point among educationalists. Mr T. R. Weaver, Deputy Under Secretary of State, Department of Education and Science, made this point at the OECD meeting. It would be foolish, he said, to predict the outcome of the present debate about higher education—especially during the run up to the general election—but it seems certain that changes will be made "in response to the strong and urgent currents which are surging through the whole fabric of our society, and in response to demands for greater equality of opportunity and more social justice". Translated from political language, this statement can probably be taken to mean that the trend towards comprehensive education is unlikely to be halted, and that higher education must be expanded to give those leaving school in 1980 the same chance of a place as present school leavers.

Among the general conclusions reached by the conference, the need to relate policies for education to social and economic objectives took pride of place. Goals for educational growth must be formulated and made explicit and, where possible, indicators which would measure the performance of the educational system, both in relation to educational goals and to the contribution of education to the wider social and economic objectives, should be established. Output budgeting, in which cost estimates are linked to objectives, has most of these ingredients, and the fact that the Department of Education has been considering using the system for its educational planning at least shows that it is keeping up with the times.