

FEDERAL COUNCIL MEETING, VEREENIGING

The Federal Council of the Medical Association of South Africa held its half-yearly meeting at the Union Steel Corporation Recreation Hall, Vereeniging, Transvaal, on 11, 12 and 13 April 1956. The Chairman (Dr. A. W. S. Sichel) presided, and there were also present the President of the Association (Dr. J. H. Struthers), the Hon. Treasurer (Dr. J. S. du Toit) and 46 other members and proxies. Twelve Council members were absent and 6 non-members of Council attended as proxies. Seven morning, afternoon or evening meetings were held.

Provision of Medical and Dental Services in relation to Medical Ethics

The South African Medical and Dental Council had convened a further conference on this subject in Cape Town on 24 March. A memorandum was before the present Federal Council meeting (set out at page 458 of this issue) which the Association's representatives had submitted at the conference. In it, reference was made to a judgment (28 November 1955) of a district court of the State of Iowa, USA, in which it was held that, by the law in that State, certain hospitals, not being 'persons' entitled to practise medicine, could not legally charge fees to patients for medical services rendered by hospital staff. After debate it was decided to obtain legal opinion on the position in South Africa.

Contract Practice

On consideration of the Association's machinery for dealing with contract-practice affairs the following decisions were made:

1. *Branch Contract Practice Committees.* Branches shall manage all contract-practice affairs in their areas. All Federal Council members representing a Branch shall be *ex officio* members of the Branch Contract Practice Committee.

2. *Liaison between Branches.* When a contract-practice matter affects more than one Branch, the Branch Contract Practice Committees shall meet together; and if unable to reach a solution they shall refer the matter to the Central Committee for Contract Practice.

3. *Central Committee for Contract Practice.* This Committee shall be composed of Federal Council members representing Branches on a *pro rata* basis. (The following members were appointed: Southern Transvaal Branch—4 members—Drs. Agranat, G. T. du Toit, Peskin and Vercueil; Cape Western—3 members—Drs. Currie, Lee and McMurray; Northern Transvaal—2 members—Drs. J. G. A. du Toit and Ziady; Natal Coastal—2 members—Drs. Deale and Broomberg; O.F.S.—1 member—Dr. Visser; other Branches—3 members—Drs. Alexander, Armistage and M. A. Robertson.)

4. *Central Executive.* The Executive Committee of the Central Committee for Contract Practice shall consist of its members resident in the Transvaal. The Executive shall meet at frequent intervals between the meetings of the full Committee.

5. *Tariff of Fees.* The Central Committee for Contract Practice shall consider the setting up of a tariff of minimum fees as a guide to the Branches, on which the Branches can base loadings for the various parts of their Branch areas.

6. *Secretariat.* A medical practitioner shall be appointed to act as local secretary of the Association in the Transvaal (with the status of associate or assistant secretary).

Open and Closed Panels. A resolution was passed that the policy of the Association is to ensure free choice of doctor by patient, and of patient by doctor, and accordingly future appointments should be on the basis of open panels, unless in exceptional circumstances and after approval by Federal Council.

Proposed Medical Aid Plan sponsored by the Medical Association

Dr. M. Shapiro submitted the report and recommendations of the subcommittee on the Economics of Medical Practice (set out at page 460 of this issue). A number of members spoke in favour of the proposal, after which the recommendations of the Subcommittee were passed. It was also decided that, in empowering the committee to inaugurate the Fund, Federal Council should advance, if necessary, a sum up to £1,000, which should be repayable.

District Surgeons

It was decided that the Parliamentary Committee, together with representatives of the District Surgeons' Group, should seek an interview with the Secretary for Health to discuss the conditions of service of part-time District Surgeons; the Group were asked first to supply a memorandum on the subject, with a model contract.

Financial Statement

The Hon. Treasurer reported that the Association accounts, which had not then been audited, showed a probable surplus of about £2,000. The estimates for 1956 were passed, with an expected shortfall of £1,600.

The *Benevolent Fund* accounts for 1955 showed an income of £3,761 and a payment of grants totalling £2,473. As compared with the previous year the donations received (£1,123) had decreased by £1,713. The accumulated funds at the end of 1955 amounted to approximately £41,965.

It was announced that exemption from the Donations Tax had been granted for donations to the Benevolent Fund; and it was decided to apply for exemption from Estates Duty also.

A decision was taken to increase the interest on the Benevolent Fund's mortgage loan in respect of Medical House, Cape Town, in accordance with current rates. (It was subsequently fixed at $6\frac{1}{2}\%$.)

Association Officials

No appointment of Assistant Editor having been made, it was decided to advertise the position of Editor. The basic salary scale for the Secretary and the Editor was fixed at £1,800×60—£2,400, and that of the Associate Secretary and Assistant Editor at £1,250×50—£1,750. The position of Public Relations Officer was brought to an end and the engagement of the present temporary incumbent was terminated.

Library Grants

On consideration of the report of a meeting with representatives of University medical libraries held in Cape Town on 26 January 1956, it was decided to continue the policy of supporting medical libraries which will supply the needs of Association members,

and (in principle) that, if the libraries of the 3 other medical schools in the Union provide a service on the basis of that now provided by the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand, they be given grants equal to those given to these two, which should not be reduced. Branches in whose area a medical library is situated were recommended to support that library financially as far as possible.

Dr. H. A. Moffat Memorial Fund

It was decided to hand over the amount that had been collected to the University of Cape Town to establish an annual certificate and book award (of the value of approximately £12 10s. 0d.) for a 5th-year medical student to be selected after a competitive examination to be conducted by the Professor of Surgery.

Legal Defence of Doctors

The establishment of a South African Medical Protection Society was favourably considered, and it was decided to invite the Medical Protection Society in London to send a representative to discuss the matter.

Potentially Harmful Drugs

Government Notice No. 1825 of 1955 lays down that all substances and preparations included in the Sixth Schedule of the Medical, Dental and Pharmacy Act must be labelled with the words 'Potentially Harmful Drug'. On the representation of the Ethical Drug Association, which considered that this might render patients unduly apprehensive, it was decided to make representations to the Minister of Health to alter the regulation so that preparations would in future be labelled 'Sixth Schedule'.

Inquests

At the request of the Secretary for Health it was agreed to set up panels of practitioners to assist inquest magistrates, and to ask the Branches operating in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Bloemfontein to nominate panels.

Personal

The President, Dr. J. H. Struthers was appointed to be the Association's representative at the forthcoming Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association. Dr. Emilia Krause was appointed as an alternate delegate, and also as delegate to the 10th General Assembly of the World Medical Association to be held in Cuba. Dr. L. I. Braun was nominated to be the Association's representative on the Witwatersrand Medical Library Committee. Dr. A. Landau was appointed member of the Executive Committee of Federal Council in place of the late Dr. M. Cole Rous.

Honours. The following were recommended for Emeritus Membership and were unanimously appointed: Dr. Robert Donald Kidd and Major-General A. J. Orenstein.