

EDITORIAL

In December 1969 the Director-General held a Study Period which was attended by senior administrative medical officers from Home Commands and British Army of the Rhine, from District Headquarters in the United Kingdom, and by specialist Directors and Consultant Advisers.

This Study Period was intended as an exercise in communication designed to bring the audience up to date with the policies, problems and proposals being considered and processed in the Army Medical Directorate so that they, the audience, could pass this information on to members of the Army Medical Services serving in their Commands, Districts or specialities. Understandably the subjects discussed covered a very broad spectrum ranging from hospital planning to medical research projects. Subscribers to the Journal would have a greater or lesser knowledge of some of these subjects and many will have been put more fully in the picture as a result of the Study Period. Two of the papers presented have been included in this edition of the Journal, namely "Medical Supply" (page 61) and "Soldiers careers R.A.M.C./R.A.D.C." (page 66) because these are subjects on which medical officers are not always so well informed as they might be. The mechanics of medical supply tends to be regarded as one of those mysteries best left to the unit quartermaster whilst the career of a soldier is all too often regarded as a matter to be delegated entirely to the company officer on the basis that Officer-in-Charge of Records will sort it all out anyway. It is hoped by publication of these papers to persuade medical and dental officers that a knowledge of these subjects will not only ease the lot of the Director of Medical Supply and Officer-in-Charge of Records but could result in better service to the customer, consumer and employer.

The first paper—"Medical Supply"—describes the creation and organisation of the present Joint Service Medical Supply system, the vicissitudes encountered and the end result. It would not be out of place here to pay special tribute to that devoted little band of medical stores personnel without whose dedication to the task in hand these vicissitudes would never so successfully have been overcome.

The second paper "Soldiers' Careers R.A.M.C./R.A.D.C." may at first sight appear a little complicated and somewhat lengthy. Readers should not allow themselves to be discouraged by these superficial deterrents because, without some informed knowledge on this question, it is quite impossible to discuss career and promotion prospects with soldiers in one's unit or department and these subjects are understandably very close to most soldiers' hearts. Apart from giving much useful information the author makes a special plea for fair play in the writing of confidential reports on soldiers and refers to the situation in which inexperienced young officers are persuaded by strong-minded senior soldiers to overwrite the latter's gradings. This, we learn, is known in Records as the "Big Frog" technique. Unfortunately this technique applies equally to confidential reports on officers where the reporting officer may be neither inexperienced nor young.

Interesting though these and other presentations were, the item which made the most impact on the assembly was undoubtedly the Director-General's policy statement. This was a straightforward statement on the aims and objects of the Army Medical Services and the methods by which the Director-General sees them as being attained. Amongst the points stressed was the need to remember that the Army Medical Services

exist to provide medical support for the Army, whether fighting or training to fight, and thus we must beware that our necessary concentration on post-graduate medical training and improvements does not distract us from preparing for our military role. The need was also stressed to show more team spirit, put our pre-occupation with pay analogues and career prospects into perspective and study constantly how to bring out—and up—the best from the tremendous fund of actual and potential expertise existing amongst our administrative and technical officers and soldiers. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of constantly striving to make our wartime role credible; to being scrupulously honest in our recruiting propaganda; to improving our communications in all directions and increasing the involvement of junior members of the Army Medical Services in decisions effecting them. Finally having blown away a plethora of traditional cobwebs the Director-General read two quotations in support of the requirement for the Army Medical Services to ensure that a worth-while career can be made to appeal to the right type of person, however it may differ from former times. The first, by Harold Nicholson, was to the effect that “ the good life is successful *activity* in congenial surroundings ” the second by the recently retired Quarter-Master General, Sir Alan Jolly;—“ The conclusion I have come to is that the only enduring asset of any Army in peace-time is it’s professionalism—the desire to be good at the job for it’s own sake. Other incentives—an obvious threat, overseas service and so on are valuable but not, in my view, central to the maintenance of morale and efficiency ”. The latter quotation is particularly apt at the present time for this issue of the Journal will have been preceded by a Government White Paper on that other “ non-central ” incentive, the Military Salary.

Order of Service to the People with Golden Star

Mr. Ribic, Yugoslavia’s Prime Minister, recently presented decorations at the country’s embassy in London to Britons who played a part in fighting the Nazis in Yugoslavia in the 1939-1945 war.

Among those who received Order of Service to the People with Golden Star were:—**Lieutenant-General Sir Alexander Drummond, Brigadier (Dr.) W. M. Cameron, Lieutenant-Colonel (Prof.) J. I. P. James.** The names of the late **Major-General W. R. D. Hamilton** and the late **Major-General W. C. Hartgill** also appeared in the list of this award.