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Why Thirty Per Cent.

SIR,—May I correct some of the accumulating misunderstandings and mis-statements about the twelfth report of the Review Body and its rejection by the Government?

First, the central issue. The functions of the Review Body are laid down in detail in chapters 2 and 10 of the report of the Royal Commission; no one should judge the matters now in dispute without first reading them. It is now for the Government to endeavour to fill the vacancies in the Review Body, observing the procedure prescribed by the Royal Commission. After what has happened this may not be easy—the job is also unpaid. As the Royal Commission's recommendations were accepted by both sides in 1960, unilateral departure from them would be a breach of faith; if the Government wants to abolish the Review Body, or replace it by some other agency, it will need the agreement of the professions. The Technical Sub-Committee, which advised the Review Body on practice expenses of general medical practitioners and the Dental Rates Study Group, which has dealt with expenses of general dental practitioners, must also not be forgotten.

Now as to figures:

(1).—The sum of £85m., which I calculated for the Review Body as the total addition to present levels of expenditure, is being described as a pay award. It is nothing of the kind; included in it is over £12m. to reimburse general medical practitioners for their rapidly increasing practice expenses and over £5m. for the contribution which the Government credits to the N.H.S. "paper" pension fund.

(2).—A table included in the statement put out by the Government on 4 June shows the "estimated average total payments to general medical practitioners" recommended by the Review Body as £8,100, without making it clear that practice expenses and employer's pension contributions are both included. In fact recent average personal incomes from the N.H.S., net of practice expenses, excluding private earnings, and before tax, are approximately: general den-

tal practitioners £3,600; general medical practitioners £3,900; full-time consultants (including distinction awards) £5,900; other hospital doctors £2,300; all hospital doctors combined (on a full-time basis) £3,600. Two years ago solicitors and actuaries averaged about £5,300.

(3).—There are at present more than 10,000 consultants; 105 receive the highest distinction award, bringing maximum pay on a full-time basis to £10,550. Spens recommended £5,000 (in 1939 £s) for 4% of consultants.

(4).—At the income levels concerned marginal tax rates would absorb about one-third to two-thirds of the recommended increases; of the balance reaching doctors and dentists part would doubtless be used to improve premises, equipment, etc.; the remainder would represent a relatively trivial addition to consumer spending power.

(5).—Mr. Wilson, confusing revenue with capital account, has said that to pay the full increases would involve cutting the hospital building programme. Are we to understand that the men of the Royal Navy are required to help finance the naval construction programme? In any case the 1970 budget provided for a surplus of £250m. in the public sector, and of £619m. in the central Government sector.

(6).—The Government statement referred to at (2) shows its "award" to general medical practitioners as £1,090; excluding expenses and pension contributions the personal pay element is about £600—or rather it would be if the allowance for practice expenses were adequate. The Government seems to be assuming that the 20% addition to "fees and allowances" will provide a 15% increase in personal pay and also cover the past and projected increase in indirectly-reimbursable practice expenses. According to my calculations it will not.

(7).—The Review Body's recommendations are not for current pay but for pay that is to remain unaltered for the next two years.

(8).—The recommendations make doctors and dentists followers, not leaders, in the pay stakes. Since others quote selectively from the Royal Commission's report perhaps I, who signed it, may do the same: "Doctors and dentists in the public service should not be used as a regulator of the national economy. Their earnings should not be prevented from rising because of a fear that others might follow."—I am, etc.,

J. H. GUNLAKE,

Member of the Pilkington Royal Commission, 1957-60, and of the Kindersley Review Body, 1962-70.
London S.W.1.

The Government and the Review Body

SIR,—The crux of the present controversy is the resignation of the entire Review Body. They have put in an immense amount of hard work over the years and have an unrivalled knowledge of Health Service problems.

We must show the public that our sanctions are aimed at supporting the Review Body's status. To this end we should accept the interim pay award, but every doctor should be prepared to resign from the Health Service on 15 July when the National Board for Prices and Incomes reports. The resignations are to be cancelled only if the P.I.B. can persuade Lord Kindersley and

his colleagues that right has been done and that the Review Body can honourably return to its duties. Either the P.I.B. agrees with the Review Body's findings or the P.I.B. persuades the Review Body that the country's financial state is such that these extra monies cannot be produced.

I, for one, would willingly forego my disputed increase in pay if it were truly in the country's interest, and I would trust Lord Kindersley's judgement in this matter.—I am, etc.,

P. A. E. EDMUNDSON.

Redcar,
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