

## PUBLIC HEALTH

It is interesting to note that the beginning of an active modern Public Health Service in this country was in the hands of men. The office of Public Health Inspector was first made as a result of the Public Health Act of 1848. Some profit could be gained by comparing this Act with the National Health Service Act of 1946, and the conditions existing then and now. The Public Health Inspector has many outlets in Public Health work such as; Inspection of housing, drainage, water supply, meat, food, smoke abatement, and the control of infectious diseases.

As far as nurses are concerned the field of public health offers wide scope, but unfortunately for the male nurse promotion is more limited than in all other branches of nursing. In health visiting, apart from a few Tuberculosis Visitors, the man is barred because he is not allowed to take Part 1 of the C.M.B. Certificate. Thus, many local authorities are loath to employ men for health visiting, despite the fact they could be of considerable use. For example, one local authority is known to employ a male Queen's Nurse in the health visiting department to attend on elderly people and discuss with them and help them with their various social problems. From first reports it appears that this experiment has met with great success. Another proven venture of some years standing has been undertaken by the same local authority. A group of about 10 male Queen's Nurses have been employed to teach a wide range of subjects, to do with health education, to boys of 11 to 15 years during afternoon classes in Secondary Modern Schools.

The bar to men taking the Midwifery Certificate again prevents men from obtaining senior posts in the Domiciliary Nursing Service. Only two men have ever risen above the rank of senior nurse. Both are Assistant Superintendents. The writer knows of men who have been qualified Queen's Nurses for over ten years and who do not see even a glimmer of hope in receiving promotion.

This Society has been neither unmindful nor neglectful of this situation, since it applies to some who are its members, and recently a deputation met the Queen's Institute. This resulted in a declaration that men of experience could apply for the following posts:—

District Nurse Tutor, or Assistant Superintendent, if in the latter post a female Superintendent having a Health Visitor Certificate is employed in the same home. Authority has not been given for any man to be promoted to Superintendent because it is thought that a man could not supervise properly the female staff. The fact that men are now in charge of hospitals where the whole staff and patient complement are women renders this argument void.

However, a change is coming into District Nursing, in which the nationally accepted qualification is now the National Certificate in District Nursing issued by the Ministry of Health, The first examination for this certificate was held in September 1960 and men were among the first successful candidates. With local authorities taking more responsibility for the training of their domiciliary nurses men may expect greater opportunities for promotion. The writer feels strongly that there is now no positive reason why suitably qualified and experienced men should not be able to apply for, and obtain, senior posts in district nursing.

What of the future?

With the great increase expected in the numbers of Enrolled nurses it may well be that these will carry out the domiciliary bedside nursing, while State Registered nurses will occupy the senior supervisory posts, to which access by male nurses is essential.