

HOSPITAL SERVICE AFTER THE WAR

The Minister of Health, Mr. Ernest Brown, speaking to-day (Wednesday) at a luncheon arranged by the Charing Cross Hospital, referred to the recent announcement of the broad lines on which the Government proposes to plan the hospital services after the war, and said:

"The first principle is, of course, that the basis of any hospital service must be the welfare of the patient. There has been in the past, and is now, a large measure of devoted service rendered to patients at hospitals of all kinds. I do not think, however, that we can claim that everyone can under the present arrangements readily obtain the treatment they need, or that patients do not sometimes fall between two stools.

"The second principle of post-war planning is that the Government should put on the major local authorities a duty to secure the provision of an adequate hospital service for their area. In discharging their new duty the local authorities must, of necessity, look for assistance to the voluntary hospitals, whose experience is so extensive and valuable. Above all, the local authorities will look to the large teaching hospitals, whose nature fits them to be the keystone of the arch of the hospital service. There is a great opportunity here for the voluntary hospitals to grasp - an opportunity to play a major part in the future as in the past, on the sure foundation provided by the financial assistance they can expect to receive from the local authorities. I am confident that this is the proper way of securing for the community the continuance of the invaluable contribution made by the voluntary hospitals; and I am confident also that the voluntary hospitals will wholeheartedly co-operate. It is in a true partnership in the fullest sense of the word that local authorities and voluntary hospitals will best serve the patient whose well-being is at stake.

"The third principle of the Government's policy is to design a service by reference to areas substantially larger than those of individual local authorities, with a proper division of function between the various hospitals in these areas. The Government's policy includes the institution of surveys - one of which has already begun in the London area - to provide a solid basis on which our future planning can rest.

"The Government recognises the double responsibility of the teaching hospitals like Charing Cross, as healers of patients and teachers of students. It has given a pledge that in addition to any financial assistance received from local authorities, the teaching hospitals will also be given increased educational grants from the Exchequer."