

704
Mr Benner

cc with enclosures: Mr Nodder
— Mr Dutton

Without enclosures: Dr Beddard
Prof Reid
Dr Waiter
Mr M Nelson

NBTS : MEETING WITH MINISTER OF STATE ON DR MAYCOCK'S PAPER

1. Following my brief discussions with Dr Beddard and yourself separately, I enclose a copy of Dr Maycock's Paper; I also enclose for comparison of the arguments a copy of the report of Prof Reid's 1973/74 Committee, which had terms of reference "To consider whether any change should be made in the present organisation of the blood transfusion services in England and Wales and to make recommendations".
2. It seems from Mr Grimstone's minute (copy attached to Mr Nodder and original to Mr Dutton for file) that Minister of State has been impressed to some extent by Dr Maycock's arguments in favour of stronger central control, and therefore believes some changes may be required. He has not of course so far seen the counter arguments, as set out in Prof Reid's Report (paras 10-13); the principal point was that the admitted disadvantages of a decentralised service were not thought to be sufficient to justify an exception from the general principle of delegation of responsibility, including financial allocations, to the Health Authorities, which at that time was being applied in respect to all other functions of the Health Service. The alternative recommended was the establishment of a strong central advisory committee (paras 14-19). I think Dr Beddard would readily agree that we are all somewhat concerned at this Committee's relative lack of success (it met yesterday for the second time after a nine-month interval; we have unfortunately been unable to draw much from the members). The Reid Report did however recommend a review after three years. The Report was taken by SMAC in July 1974; Prof Dacie supported the report, on behalf of the RCPATH, and Dr Rue welcomed it from the regional point of view. The Committee particularly endorsed the proposal to review the working of the new NBTS Central Committee after three years.
3. I do not know whether you and Dr Beddard might think it would be helpful for Minister to see the Reid Report now, so that he has an opportunity to consider the balance of arguments before we discuss the position with him. If so we could submit it either just with a very short covering note explaining its relevance, or under cover of a rather longer note bringing the position up to date. My own view is that it might make the meeting easier if he had seen the Report, but that we should update it orally.
4. Dr Owen also wishes to know whether the PHLS or some other central body could take over the Transfusion Service. We would need to review what other bodies there are, and if necessary to check with Solicitors the extent of their powers, but my first reaction is that the PHLS Board could not because their functions are limited to "the administration of the public health laboratory service", defined as "the microbiological (formerly bacteriological) service provided under section 17 of the NHS Act 1946". It seems very unlikely that any other body is in a better position. Legislation of some kind would appear to be essential.
5. The other question is whether a Director could be appointed "with a line of command to the Regional Transfusion Centres". I have not sought advice,

/but

but the answers appear to be -

- a Director could be appointed, under Secretary of State's general powers in the NHS Acts, but
- a line of command would be impossible so long as all the staff are employees of the RHAs, the property is within the responsibility of the RHAs, and the allocation of finance is at their discretion; although the last could easily be changed, the first two pose considerable difficulties.

6. This problem is of course just another instance of the "central control - RHA decision" controversy. In regard to the NBS, I do not think Dr Maycock has raised any new points of principle additional to those recorded in the Reid Report.

7. I am of course available for discussion if you would like to meet before we see Dr Owen. If you and Dr Beddard agree with my view in para 3, I will send Mr Grimstone a copy of the Report for Dr Owen to read before our discussion with him.

M W DRAPER

M W Draper
HS2A

1212 HANH X

GRO-C

23 June 1976