

S.C.C. 36.

THE FEDERATION OF BRITISH
CREMATION AUTHORITIES

THE INSTITUTE OF BURIAL AND
CREMATION ADMINISTRATION

THE CREMATION SOCIETY

THE PROPRIETARY CREMATORIA
ASSOCIATION

MINUTES of a Joint Meeting of representatives of the above four Organisations held at the Bonnington Hotel, Southampton Row, London, W. C. 1., on Thursday, 15th July 1965, at 2.30 p.m.

PRESENT:-

Representing the Federation

Councillor R.W. Ford (In the Chair)
Mr. L. J. Evans (also representing
the Institute)

Mr. H. G. Garrett
Mr. A. C. McMillan
Mr. J. W. Roberts

Representing the Institute

Mr. T. H. Burt
Mr. E. Staples

Representing the Cremation Society

Mr. H. D. E. Carter
Mr. P. H. Jones
Mr. K. G. Prevette

Representing the Proprietary
Crematoria Association

Mr. E. Field

1. Chairman: It was agreed that Councillor Ford should take the chair.

2. Evidence to the Committee on Death Certification and Coroners:

Detailed consideration was given to the document circulated by the Secretary of the above Committee and the following conclusions were reached:-

PART I

Question 1. The issue of medical certificates should serve all of the purposes defined in sub-clauses (a) to (f) but principally it should provide evidence for the authorisation of the disposal of the body.

Question 3. Every body should be examined after death has occurred and before any death certificate is issued.

The Members of this Committee did not feel qualified to define the circumstances, but it was asserted that whatever are those circumstances as to eligibility, they should apply to all deaths, whether disposal by cremation, by burial, or other means, is to follow.

Question 4. It was considered that whenever there is any element whatsoever of doubt, a post-mortem examination should always be held. Any power to order such an examination should be exercised irrespective of whether cremation or burial is to ensue.

Question 5. It was considered of vital importance that no interference at all (whether by sanitisation or temporary preservation or other treatment) with the body shall occur until after the cause of death has been certified.

Question 6. None. No special precautions should be necessary as the medical certification procedure should be adequate to cover all the four methods of disposal mentioned.

Question 7. This is a question for the medical profession. It is understood that it is common knowledge that in many cases the cause of death cannot be definitely ascertained unless a post-mortem examination is carried out. If this is so, then the information included should not be such as to aim at ascertaining definitely the cause of death, if the object of the information is to give confirmation that death resulted from natural rather than criminal causes.

Question 8. It was considered that the procedure as regards still-births should be identical with that for other deaths.

Question 9. No comment, except that any other amendments should be applicable generally whatever the method of disposal to be used.

PART II

Section 'A' - Question 4. Still-births should be reported to the Coroner when no certificate from a Doctor or Midwife is available, and the Coroner should have such power to enquire as he considers appropriate.

Section 'B' - Question 10 and 11. No specific comment was made on these questions. It was pointed out, however, that at present there are sometimes delays of 5 or 6 days in the Coroner issuing his certificate and this delay is very distressing for relatives, difficult for the cremation movement, and the cost of a prolonged investigation can be large. Appointments of Coroners and the areas for which they are responsible should be aimed at reducing these delays.

GENERAL COMMENTS

(a) We have refrained from comment upon questions outside our province or experience.

(b) The basic point is reiterated that the death certification procedure and the functions of Coroners should be identical whichever form the disposal of the body is to take.

(c) Consideration should be given by the Committee to the dangers from radio-active tissues arising from the use of radio-active isotopes, and provision should be made for the notification of such dangers and the adequate protection of all who may come into contact with such bodies.

(d) It cannot be stressed too strongly that the present system does not provide for proper identity of bodies in mortuaries and the establishments of Funeral Directors. It is very easy for the wrong body to be examined, coffined, buried or cremated.

Whatever system of certification is adopted, its value disappears if there is not strict control of identity from the time of death and certification of cause of death until final disposal.

After the body has been coffined, this identification should appear on the coffin itself and not on the lid thereof.

- (e) In cases of deaths reported to the Coroner when he decides that the ordering of a post-mortem examination or the holding of an inquest is unnecessary, he issues the 'Notification to the Registrar by the Coroner' Part A - commonly called the 'pink form'. Frequently this occurs when there is no medical attendant competent to complete the Cremation Medical Certificate B. This causes unnecessary delay, expense and distress to relatives by necessitating a privately arranged post-mortem examination with the completion of Cremation Certificate D to enable cremation to take place. It is recommended that the powers of the Coroner should be extended to enable him to issue his Cremation Certificate E in such cases.

It was agreed that, if requested, oral evidence would be given and if so required Mr. L. J. Evans, and Mr. A. C. McMillan and one other person would represent the four Organisations.

The Meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chairman.