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Anger at bid to cut influence on FPCs

THE full extent of Government efforts to diminish the medical profession's influence on the new FPCs is dawning on doctors — and GMSC leaders are angry at what they see as a brazen political snub.

Of the seven GMSC members who were formerly FPC chairmen, not one has been reappointed by Health Secretary Norman Fowler. The number of medical chairmen has been reduced from 33 to 20.

What has particularly riled doctors' leaders is that LMC secretaries — traditionally appointed as medical members to FPCs — have also been squeezed out.

Rejected

Dr Solly Zuckerman, secretary of Birmingham LMC, has been rejected by Mr Fowler to sit on the city FPC.

He suspected that the minister had gone out of his way to ensure that 'politically active' doctors were not reappointed.

He claimed: 'I think the battle lines are being drawn and one suspects there have been clear political motives in the omission of certain doctors from FPCs.'

Dr Zuckerman stressed that he saw his own rejection as a vote of confidence in his LMC work.

GMSC chairman Dr Michael Wilson warned there was 'dis-

by
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quiet up and down the country about the delays in appointing members.'

He believed that without the full complement of FPC members the transition to FPC independence on April 1 would be hampered.

Dr Wilson has said he will be asking LMCs for accurate and anecdotal evidence about the state of play on FPC appointments throughout the UK.

Dr Lionel Kopelowitz, chairman of a BMA working party looking at FPCs, said he had already warned that the 1984 NHS Act would destroy the profession's privilege to make direct appointments to FPCs.

He said: 'There is already some evidence that a medical chairman of one FPC has refused to stand for his LMC because there could be a conflict of interests between his role as a medical LMC member and his accountability to the Secretary of State as a medical FPC chairman.'

Professor slams enarity for its 'political motives'



Dr Chris Donovan... 'disgrace'

CASH compensation for AIDS victims who contract the disease through contaminated blood transfusions on the National Health Service is being fiercely resisted by Health Minister Kenneth Clarke.

The idea has come from a Tory backbencher who also wants the Government to sue the American exporters of the infected supplies which have already affected a number of patients.

Mr Clarke, however, has flatly rejected any suggestion of legal action — largely out of fear of setting a precedent.

Smoking's criminal £60m

ADOLESCENT smokers are spending £60m a year on their habit — even though it is illegal for them to be sold cigarettes.

North London GP Dr Chris Donovan, speaking at the launch of a new National Opinion Poll survey, said: 'There's been very little effort to enforce the law — but a family doctor can help if the teenager genuinely wants to kick the habit.'

'The problem is that recent events have frightened off many under-16s who increasingly see the GP as yet another authority figure.'

It was important he said that the GP built up a relationship with his or her young patients based on trust.

'It's sad that each generation should produce new

smokers during school age and that our efforts bear more fruit in the middle years,' he said referring to the poll which first looked at the nation's smoking habits in 1981.

The biggest success on giving up the habit was in the 35 to 49 age group. Those in the 16 to 35 years and the 49 to 65 years age ranges were less susceptible to the message that smoking was harmful and directly linked to heart disease and cancer.

He also slammed the Government for allowing cigarette companies to sponsor sporting events, giving the habit a glamorous image in the immature minds of the adolescent who was anxious for a social prop. He called this 'a disgrace'.

'The Government is more concerned with attacking doctors than attacking illness,' he said.

Clarke resists call for AIDS compensation

Southampton MP Christopher Choche proposed the compensation arrangements while quizzing the minister about the AIDS risk faced by patients receiving transfusions or Factor VIII.

Mr Choche later said he could understand Mr Clarke's reluctance to establish a legal precedent, but added that if it had been Britain which had exported contaminated blood to the US

the American purchasers would have demanded compensation.

● Health Secretary Norman Fowler is worried that he will not be allocated enough parliamentary time to outlaw commercial surrogacy bureaux — so he is secretly asking MPs to exert political pressure on him.

This amazing behind-the-scenes exercise reflects a Cabinet tussle over the Commons timetable.

Mr Fowler and Health Minister Kenneth Clarke are both anxious to have a bill on the stocks by the time the next wave of commercial 'wombs-to-let' births hits the headlines.

But though any legislation would enjoy relatively smooth passage through Parliament, the Government's business managers believe it could not be fitted in before the new session starts in the autumn.

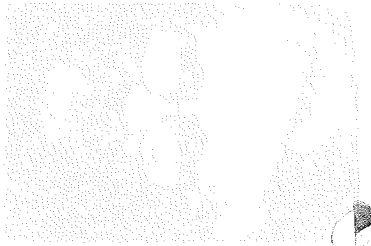
To find time other Cabinet ministers would have to be persuaded to help. But at present they are not convinced that the matter is urgent enough.

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