

*Hydatid Disease.*—The campaign against this preventable disease was continued vigorously along the lines outlined in previous reports. Some 375,000 phials, each containing four tablets, of one-quarter grain of arecoline hydrobromide have been supplied to local authorities for distribution to dog-owners. In conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, hydatid exhibits under the direction of Dr. E. W. Bennett, of the Department of Hydatid Research and Prevention, Medical School, University of Otago, have been exhibited at various agricultural shows throughout the Dominion. These exhibits have attracted much attention and proved very valuable in the campaign against this disease. By means of literature and press articles, lectures to farmers' unions, women's institutes, and radio talks, and intensive programme direction, particularly among rural communities, much has been done by the above Department, and in this work our officers have co-operated.

*Cancer.*—The New Zealand Branch of the British Empire Cancer Campaign Society continues as a live force in the control of cancer in this country, and works in close co-operation with the Department. The president at the last annual meeting said :—

“The society was distinctive in that it achieved a happy combination of Government, through the Health Department, Hospital Boards, medical profession, and the general public in a common attack upon the disease of cancer. The public no doubt will be very gratified to learn that the society could see after nine years a very definite improvement in the results of treatment given. It encouraged, the society to believe that it would, as time went on, get even better results.”

The holding of the Tenth Australian and New Zealand Cancer Conference in Wellington stimulated public interest and also gave cancer-workers in this country an opportunity of reviewing the problem as affecting New Zealand, and bringing their organization up to date and exchanging views generally.

The Government appointed a Medical Committee at the request of Dr. Ulric Williams to investigate a special treatment of cancer, known as the “Koch and Baker,” which had been widely advertised in the United States of America. With Dr. Ulric Williams was associated Professor Henry Brose, of Sydney, and Mr. McCulloch, who describes himself as a naturopath. The Committee consisted of Sir James S. Elliott (Chairman), Dr. H. Hardwick Smith; Dr. J. O. Mercer, Pathologist, Wellington Hospital; and Dr. T. R. Ritchie, Director, Division of Public Hygiene. This committee was not given an opportunity of completing its investigation as Dr. Ulric Williams broke up negotiations on the grounds that Baker and Koch declined to submit their products to test in their absence.

However, as a result of the examination of cases that had been treated with this method the Committee in its report states :—

“From our general knowledge and from the observations we were permitted to make in investigating the cases at Wanganui, we have no reason whatever to suppose that Koch's fluid has any effect in curing generalized cancer. All the evidence available, without exception, convinces our committee that the claim cannot be substantiated that the treatment which we saw practised at Wanganui has any merit as a cure or palliative for cancer. The claim that a cure has been found for cancer should never be made and promulgated until prolonged tests have shown that the claim is a reasonable one, otherwise patients who might be cured or their lives greatly prolonged by surgical or radiological means, because of their dallying with vaunted cures such as Baker's or Koch's, have thereby allowed their disease to advance from the early stages, when it can be treated by recognized and approved methods. This is all the more important when such alleged cures as Baker's and Koch's are sold as commercial products and when cancer patients are called upon to pay, in some cases, high fees for the treatment. Your committee considers that it is in the public interest that a statement should be made that our hope of finding anything useful in the treatment by Dr. Williams and his colleagues has proved illusory.”

The danger of raising false hopes in regard to the cure for cancer was also emphasized at the cancer conference, which issued the following statement after considering reports upon the nature and effects of treatment of cancer cases with the Baker and Koch fluids :—

“It is obvious that it would be a heartless proceeding to attempt to exploit sufferers from so dread a disease as cancer unless there was a reasonable belief, based on experience, that the remedies vaunted as cures are reliable. The mental anguish and suffering caused to patients so treated is the same whether they have been induced to try unreliable treatment through exploitation or through misguided enthusiasm.

“The patients that have been investigated in Australia and in New Zealand have not, in the opinion of the conference, derived any benefit from Baker's or Koch's treatment. These methods of treatment are of no value, and moreover, tend to cause patients to lose valuable time in adopting reliable methods of surgical or radiological treatment.

“The conference is of opinion that vaunted claims or discredited or doubtful remedies for cancer should be discouraged and that it is highly improper for any person, medical or lay, to claim success for an alleged cure unless such treatment has been investigated by competent observers, particularly when by so doing they are exploiting a secret and purely commercial nostrum.”