slavery. Some of the present Ministers lost nothing in that cause. Ought not the public to be reminded of Nuremberg? It is because of fear of this degradation if we surrender our liberty to the State under the authority of Ministers as devoid of culture as those who held sway in the Germany of the recent past that I hasten to support the Independence Fund. It happened in Germany and we have been warned.—I am, etc.,

Bolton.

W. HARVEY BENNETT.

A Public Meeting

SIR.—In view of the importance of getting public opinion to our side the following experience may be of interest. Without any outside support I hired a hall and advertised a public meeting. I was told I would probably get 50 or 60 people. To my amazement 500 crammed into the hall and 200 were said to have been turned away.

I spoke for 50 minutes and then asked for questions. Not only did I receive no heckling, but as response to a suggestion I made in reply to a question a local committee has been formed to organize a petition to be sent to our M.P. pledging support to the doctors and giving the opinion that the Health Act as it now stands can lead only to a deterioration of the standard of medical treatment.

The population of the town is 4,000 and the constituency returns a Labour M.P., but I believe the town itself to be Right Wing in its sympathies. Our trade unionist has since said to me, "If you could tell the workers all you told us last night they would be with you to a man."

I would emphasize two things. The meeting was organized without the outside aid of any organization, which gave it a non-political flavour. I feel addressing Conservative, Liberal, or Labour meetings tends to divide the public into hostile groups. Secondly, the advertising emphasized the effect of the Act on the patient—not the doctor.—I am, etc.,

Newport Pagnell, Bucks.

A. A. CLAY.

Partial Service

SIR.—In the first leader of *The Times* of Feb. 17 I read the following astonishing statement:

"Existing public medical services originated either in the Poor Law or in insurance schemes and were intended to provide elementary and partial forms of medical care for a restricted section of the community. . . . These services were regarded not as the normal means of obtaining medical care, but as services for those who could afford nothing better, and doctors were prepared to tolerate this unhappy tradition because the private sector in medicine remained financially more important than the public sector."

That a writer in so important and distinguished a paper as *The Times* could express such views is a measure of the gulf separating the views of the medical profession from those of at least a very large section of the public. I wrote to *The Times* protesting that while a minority of doctors may have felt themselves forced by the conditions of the service to adopt such an attitude the majority had only one standard of treatment for rich and poor alike—namely, the best the doctor was capable of.

I feel that it is because they fear that a State medical service under the almost dictatorial control of the Minister of Health may drive many doctors to accept and adopt this partial form of medical treatment rather than infringement of the B.M.A.'s basic principles that has led so many doctors to oppose the present unamended Act.—I am, etc.,

London, W.8.

H. H. SANGUINETTI.

Immediate Action Wanted

SIR.—Mr. Bevan's war of nerves has already opened against the medical profession. Patients are to be issued with their Health Service cards this month.

I feel, and I think from reading articles in the *B.M.J.* that other doctors feel too, that some immediate and firm action by the doctors is required now instead of waiting until July 5, after which doctors will lose the compensation for their practices. Even if this action only consisted in a general refusal of doctors to sign any form of certificate from now on, except those which they are bound to sign by contract, such as National

Health Insurance certificates, and others such as milk certificates, which are necessary for their patients' health.

Resistance to unwanted conditions by any other bodies of people, such as coal miners, would be along these lines, whereas passive resistance will, I think, only lead to the profession being eaten up piecemeal.—I am, etc.,

Colchester.

R. H. BERRY.

Human Poliomyelitis and Canine Encephalitis

SIR.—During the past year this country has had the most severe epidemic of acute anterior poliomyelitis on record. During the same period there appears to have been a great increase in the number of cases of encephalitis in dogs. Because of the time association between the human and canine illness, there have been communications from a number of quarters in the medical, veterinary, and lay press suggesting that the canine disease was the result of infection with this season's strain of poliomyelitis virus.

Recent investigations by MacIntyre, Trevan, and Montgomerie (*Veterinary Record*, 1948, 60, 102) have shown that a disease of dogs, comparatively new to this country, was prevalent at this time. While it simulates true distemper in some of its symptoms, encephalitis occurred in a high proportion of cases. In none of these cases was the histological picture similar to that of human poliomyelitis. There seems little doubt but that the prevalence of this disease in dogs at the same time as the poliomyelitis outbreak was no more than a coincidence.

Attempts to infect dogs with poliomyelitis virus in other countries have regularly been unsuccessful. Even so, it seemed worth while repeating these experiments using a strain of virus obtained from the recent epidemic. The dogs used were of mixed breed, all under one year old, and all were immune to distemper virus.

In the first experiment three dogs were inoculated intracerebrally under "nembatal" anaesthesia with 0.1 ml. of a 10% suspension of first passage poliomyelitis monkey cord. The monkey had been inoculated with brain and cord of a fatal human case in this year's epidemic, and the material used for the dogs was proved to be infective at the time by passage into a further monkey. The dogs showed no elevation of temperature, or symptoms and signs of any kind. One was killed after 14 days and two after 21 days. The brains and cords were removed, and after representative sections had been taken for histological examination pieces of brain and cord were pooled, ground as a 20% suspension, and cultured. The tissues from each dog were ground separately. The small number of bacteria present were removed by centrifugation at 3,000 r.p.m. for half an hour in an angle centrifuge. The suspensions were pooled and inoculated intracerebrally into five more dogs. These remained completely well; two were killed after 22 days, and a third passage made of these brains, reinforced with more monkey tissue, into four more dogs. These animals remained perfectly well, and one was killed after 35 days for histological examination. The remaining three have remained well up to the 40th day. No abnormalities could be detected on microscopic examination of the brains. Tests for neutralizing antibodies have not yet been carried out in inoculated dogs.

Thus, distemper-immune dogs do not appear to be susceptible to one of the 1947 English strains of human poliomyelitis virus.—I am, etc.,

Virus Reference Laboratory,
Central Public Health Laboratory,
London, N.W.9.

F. O. MACCALLUM.

Sepsis Scientifica

SIR.—Dr. A. McPherson's thoughtful letter (March 20, p. 567) calls for a few words in reply. I did not mean that a science that could be expressed wholly or largely in mathematical terms was therefore a better science, merely that its pursuants have been more fortunate than we. I agree cordially that it would be absurd to expect that all biological processes could be completely or even properly expressed in terms of measurement. We shall, however, not be wrong in applying them where we can nor shall we retard progress by doing so. It is probably true that too great an insistence on exact definition in the most precise terms is better fitted for the aftermath of discovery, for discovery itself has often had little to do with rigid definition