

AN INTERVIEW WITH SIR ERIC PRIDIE Director of the Colonial Medical Service

During the recent visit to Malta of Sir Eric Pridie the BMSA had an opportunity to discuss with him the Colonial Medical Service in a brief interview. In the past several Maltese doctors have entered this service, and a report of this interview may be of interest to those of the present medical students who are inclined to do likewise.

The interview with Sir Eric Pridie was by no means comprehensive and all it did was to touch on a few points of interest in connection with the Colonial Medical Service. Those who require full information on the subject will find it elsewhere in this issue.

Before entering the service it is essential that a doctor must have passed a pre-registration year in a hospital recognised for the purpose. In addition to this it is useful, but not essential, to obtain the Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. Other qualifications such as the DPH are of value to the doctor as they usually carry with them a better post and a higher salary.

On entering the service the doctor chooses a country of preference and if fortunate may be sent to that country but this cannot be guaranteed. Sir Eric Pridie pointed out that the Medical Service in each country was a separate independent entity and that in effect the doctor was employed by the Government concerned and not by the Colonial Office.

The Colonial medical service was only a central organisation to distribute doctors to the various countries. When asked about transfer from one area to another, Sir Eric said that though there was no automatic transfer arrangement, if a doctor wished to transfer to a certain area and a post fitting his seniority was vacant in that area the transfer could usually be

arranged. He added that in actual fact few transfers were requested.

It was possible to enter the service either on a permanent basis or on a short term one. It seemed that the short term was becoming increasingly popular.

Sir Eric Pridie was then asked what provisions were made for those doctors who suddenly found that their services were no longer required by a territory that had acquired self-government. It was felt that this was a question of great importance. Sir Eric replied that there was no scheme of incorporation in the National Health Service. He pointed out, however, that such an eventuality was most unlikely to occur for nobody would wish to get rid of doctors, and in fact it was more usual to wish to increase them. In the past when a territory became self-governing what usually happened was that the new government offered the doctors a choice of either remaining in their employ or of receiving compensation in the form of a gratuity. In the case of the Sudan the government had found that the gratuity (£8,000) was so generous that they were in a serious danger of losing all their doctors! The terms of compensation were the concern of the particular government involved but it was inconceivable that a doctor should find himself out of work through an acquisition of self-government or without compensation. It was not unlikely that self-government would actually increase the doctors' remuneration.

In conclusion Sir Eric Pridie said that many Maltese doctors seemed to find Northern Nigeria congenial, perhaps because it was only a short flight from Malta. He said that the climate was pleasant and the work most interesting.