

## *Editorials*

### UNFROCKED

SINCE 1919 the health of the nation has been in the care of a minister of health, often of cabinet rank, who has had direct access to the heads of state at all times. The last of the line, Mr Kenneth Robinson, may take comfort from the knowledge that he has held office longer than any of his predecessors since 1948 and that he achieved an unusual harmony amongst all who worked with him in the common cause. No man could wish more than that.

At a time when the government has before it a report presented by four of its ministers of state which recommends at local authority level a cleavage between the administration of the welfare and health responsibilities, the government have themselves combined the health and social security departments under one ministry. The rationale behind this particular move is difficult to understand: economy in administration, streamlining of control, and marrying like to like are advanced as cogent arguments in its favour. There is no evidence that the Ministry of Health has been inefficient. On the contrary its record has been good. The 50 years of its existence have seen many triumphs in the field of preventive medicine. There have been deficiencies, and some, such as those in the hospital building programme are bad, but the chief blame of these must lie with the keeper of the nation's purse strings, with the Treasury and with the successive Chancellors of the Exchequer who, in apportioning financial priorities have failed to assess the need. Difficulties there have been with the doctors whose job it has been to make the health service work, but these again have been of a financial nature. Never has the art and science of medicine been changing so fast as it is today. Never have so many problems of ethics and of policy as well as of science, been before the public. Is this the moment when a successful administration should be demoted and given a subservient role? Someone somewhere has surely bumbled.

### COMPUTERS

COMPUTERS—like the Campbells—are coming. Whether we should cry 'hooray! hooray!' will depend on our faith in the *Deus ex Machina*. Experience with the G.P.O. telephone—the