

can never be the same again: that the basic staples for so long—ship-building, fabrics, steel, cheap cars and tractors, etc—can all be made more cheaply by developing countries. This country's work and prosperity will be rebuilt only by massive investments and redeployment into high technology, sophisticated manufacturing and the service industries, and until this is accomplished there is bound to be huge structural unemployment. Recognize it they may, admit to it they will not. Pieties are mouthed, cosmetic schemes launched, but the basic fact has not been put before the electorate. The Supplementary Benefits Commission's efforts to get higher long-term rates of benefit for the unemployed were considered to be right in principle, but were not implemented. "There are no powerful groups outside government pressing for action on behalf of the unemployed."

As he describes "the politics of poverty", Professor Donnison recounts in a fascinating way how his Commission picked their priorities, assessed the political situation and looked for allies, and set going the open discussion of ideas. Out of these came proposals that eventually became an Act of Parliament. The most impressive feature of this saga is that he and the Commission listened to politicians and high civil servants, to academics who had researched the field, to their own front-line workers, to pressure groups, to thinking people in major institutions, and all those with a point to make on behalf of the disadvantaged, however militant or radical. Equally, they discussed their ideas with all these people and provided them with facts.

What is the importance of these books for general practice? Firstly, they should help us to avoid looking for simplistic solutions: problems do not go away if you throw money at them (or to the people trying to grapple with them). Secondly, from both LeGrand and Donnison's work, that people need "space": freedom for manoeuvre, freedom to make their own choices, freedom to live their own lives. This corresponds closely to what we have known for a long time instinctively in general practice and are beginning to teach explicitly. Dubos (1980) defines health as the ability to adapt to your environment (come in out of the rain or go where the food is), while Maslow (1970) establishes his hierarchy of need in which people can receive education (and, similarly, health care) only of a sort appropriate to their level of need. Those with the most pressing needs have least "space".

We are going to have to pick up the pieces for structural unemployment, and while we must use all our skills for our individual patients and enhance these by careful listening, even to people who tend to set our teeth on edge, we must be prepared to enter the political arena on their behalf. The College should take

more than one leaf out of Donnison's book, but in particular learn from his readiness to listen to and provide facts for a wide range of institutions, pressure groups and individuals.

D. H. H. METCALFE  
*Professor of General Practice  
Manchester*

#### References

- Dubos, R. (1980). *Man Adapting*. London: Yale University Press.  
Maslow, A. (1970). *Motivation and Personality*. New York and London: Harper Row.

### THE MAKING OF THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

J. E. Pater

*King's Fund Books  
London (1981)*

210 pages. Price £10.00

Most historical studies of the NHS have been written by American authors and the field has recently been covered by Honingsbaum in *The Division in British Medicine*. However, for a balanced and scholarly account of the political manoeuvring, changing professional attitudes and government plans leading up to the "appointed day" I unhesitatingly recommend John Pater's book.

It is not a personal reminiscence; like Honingsbaum, Pater has made a painstaking study of contemporary documents, including cabinet and departmental papers now released by the Public Records Office. Unlike Honingsbaum, he is not influenced by preconceived ideas about the proper organization of medical care, and his 40 years of service with the Ministry of Health and DHSS have equipped him to assess much more accurately the relative importance of competing pressure groups.

After an opening chapter reviewing the previous 30 years, the bulk of the text comprises a detailed and dispassionate account of successive proposals and discussions initiated by the wartime coalition government and the subsequent negotiations with Aneurin Bevan's department, leading to the passage of the NHS Act and its implementation in 1948. Only in a brief final chapter does Pater offer his own assessment, 30 years later, of the strengths and weaknesses of the service thus introduced.

While not a book for every practitioner's shelves, it should be required reading for anyone involved in planning future developments; Pater's conclusion that "it now seems that quite unnecessary strife and bitterness was generated over the birth of the service" is well argued and some understanding of how this arose would surely help to avoid further damaging acrimony or confrontation.

T. E. A. CARR  
*Retired General Practitioner and  
DHSS Medical Officer, Guildford*

### PROBLEMS IN ARTHRITIS AND RHEUMATISM

D. N. Golding

*MTP Press  
Lancaster (1981)*

160 pages. Price £7.95

No one can deny that general practitioners need to understand rheumatology. In the introduction to this book, the author points out that each of us sees one to three new cases of rheumatic disease each day—that is nearly 700 cases a year. A clear, factual, authoritative guide by an author who understands a general practitioner's problems would therefore be both important and useful. This book, one of a series written for general practitioners by specialists in district general hospitals, is a great disappointment. The layout is haphazard, with different subjects seemingly popping up almost at random. Indeed, if it were not for its mercifully first rate index it would be hard to find one's way round. Many subjects are repeated whilst others are only just touched on. I found it unhelpful to read that the treatment of, say, capsulitis of the shoulder is steroid injections, without any real information as to where, how often and how much should be injected. Most of the advice is written to the level of students rather than experienced general practitioners. Indeed, at times it is plain contradictory: on page 120 x-rays are recommended for severe or persistent low back pain, but on the next page they are recommended after only three days of acute pain. The bibliography is restricted to six books, but with no journal references. It adds up to something of a wasted opportunity to cover an important subject.

DAVID HASLAM  
*General Practitioner, Ramsey*