What are the most ineradicable memories of this great workers'-playtime adventure? Overtopping all else on the negative side is the sense of disquiet engendered by reports from the Soviet Union. On the positive side I would place in some sort of rank order: the good companionship of colleagues; the disclosure of unsuspected talents and preoccupations; the devotion beyond the call of duty to our physical well-being by Eric Shepherd; the oratory of our guide and mentor in Mexico City, The Prince of Paradoxes, Sr. 'X'. And, finally, the sight of three silent Mexicans, heads bowed, in line astern sharing the shade of one telegraph pole.

HENRY R. ROLLIN.

THE PROBLEM OF DANGEROUS DRIVERS*

Council of Europe Resolution on the Deprivation of the Right to Drive a Motor Vehicle
B (71) 102 Annex I

As a move towards the reduction of traffic accidents in the 17 member countries of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers of the Council has agreed to a Resolution on the deprivation of the right to drive a motor vehicle by individuals convicted of serious offences against road traffic regulations. Among such offences are included causing death or injury to another person as a result of reckless or dangerous driving, hit-and-run driving, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Implicit in the Resolution is the need to diagnose the dangerous driver and keep him off the road, but it is evident that this desirable objective can be achieved only after an offence has been committed. It is proposed that during the period of deprivation the offender should be exposed to 'treatment of an educational or psychological kind'; and that a medical examination may be required before his licence is restored. An additional proposal deals with the introduction of a 'points system'—already in operation in a number of countries and some Australian states—whereby accumulation of 10 points for repeated infringements of traffic regulations leads to loss of licence. Effective enforcement of the proposal implies the need for all member countries to make available to a central Register details of individuals who have lost points as a result of traffic offences.

Although the general intention of the Resolution is admirable—to keep dangerous drivers off the road—its application raises a number of problems. The number of potential offenders is very large, and one might well wonder who is to administer the 'psychological treatment' and on what basis medical advisers will conclude whether an individual is fit or unfit to drive. The alcoholic and the drug-dependent drivers may be more easily recognizable than the equally dangerous sociopath. Even so, debate continues as to whether the heavily intoxicated driver is an alcoholic, an unusually heavy drinker, or merely somebody who has drunk unwisely, driven recklessly and so come to the notice of the authorities. Rigorous application of the Ministers' Resolution would certainly require adequate administrative machinery which would include properly trained medical personnel to assist courts and tribunals concerned with traffic offences. At present one might doubt whether sufficient medical expertise is available for this type of work, bearing in mind the need for competent psychiatric assessment of a fair number of these offenders. Hence it might be preferable to see a uniform development of a points system administered by non-medical personnel in Road Traffic Departments. No doubt certain offenders—the alcoholics, those repeatedly convicted of drunken or dangerous driving and some sociopaths—could be referred for medical opinion or alternatively, advised to seek medical treatment if they wished to have their licences restored. Such a procedure is proposed for some drivers who have accumulated a total of 8 points, a figure that implies a need for the drivers' competence to be closely investigated.

Britain's closer links with Europe through joining the Common Market presumably enjoin on us the need to examine the implications of the Council of Europe Resolution as it affects our own management of traffic offenders. If medical personnel are to be used to assist in the control of dangerous drivers it is none too soon to start considering the numbers of offenders who might be referred for examination and 'treatment'; and by whom and how this is to be accomplished.

F. A. WHITLOCK.

* See also in the Report of Proceedings in Parliament, *ante*.

VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

[The following article gives a brief account of the background and current activities of the National Council on Alcoholism. Similar articles describing the work of other voluntary organizations will appear in future issues. An account of the activities of the National Association for Mental Health by Mary Applebey was published in the December 1971 Supplement.]

The National Council on Alcoholism

The National Council on Alcoholism was founded in 1963 and the primary objects in its programme for fighting the disease is to educate the public towards

https://doi.org/10.1192/S0007125072302874 Published online by Cambridge University Press