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MEDICOLEGAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH ASPECTS

I. MEDICOLEGAL ASPECTS

A. OCCUPATIONAL TUMORS

AS THE government is charged with the safeguard of the health of the people, the state is properly concerned in every aspect of occupational disease: preventive, curative, forensic, sociological, and financial. Industrial accidents and diseases resulting in the development of precancerous and cancerous conditions have been made the subject of legislative action in numerous countries. These considerations resulted in the establishment of industrial accident insurance laws, workmen's occupational disease compensation laws, and industrial safety codes regulating and controlling the working conditions in industry. The first attempts made in this direction are represented by the various royal decrees issued in England during the early parts of the nineteenth century, regulating the age of the apprentices and the working conditions of the chimney sweeps' trade so as to curtail the occurrence of scrotal cancer among the sweeps.

This small and feebly enforced beginning of industrial health legislation in regard to occupational cancer was followed, in 1884, by the first comprehensive national scheme for providing compensation to injured workmen, enacted in Germany (German Industrial Insurance Act). The compensation laws covering industrial accidental injuries passed subsequently in other countries were patterned after the German laws, but were not, in many instances, as far reaching and comprehensive as the German original. These early laws afforded protection and compensation only for neoplasms arising from or related to accidental industrial injuries. They did not cover the more important and frequent cancers caused by exposure to certain occupational agents. The inclusion of the occupational tumors proper in the workmen's compensation laws is a relatively recent development, dating back no more than twenty years, when laws were passed in many countries adding occupational diseases to the list of compensable disabilities arising out of injuries sustained during work.

Following the enactment of a federal compensation law in 1908, applying only to the relatively few employees of the United States government engaged in hazardous occupations, all but two states (Mississippi and Arkansas) have passed laws providing compensation to workmen for industrial injuries (Koontz). There are at the present time only twenty-four states which possess some kind of compensation law covering occupational diseases in general or of