

EFFECT OF ETHYL ON PUBLIC HEALTH.

We publish to-day in our news pages the first instalment of a very full and detailed report, prepared by Dr. Myer Coplans, on the effect of ethyl motor spirit upon health. It is of special importance for many reasons. The general public, and motorists in particular, want to know all about this new form of fuel. Most of all do they want to know whether it affects the human body. Dr. Coplans gives them the information they require, with all possible simplicity.

His report is the first that has been published in this country by a distinguished expert after an exhaustive and unbiassed examination of the scientific evidence. His authority is all the greater because he has had at his disposal data supplied by the Research Association of British Motor Manufacturers. His conclusions will be difficult to challenge. They show that in certain circumstances the lead compound which ethyl contains may be distinctly detrimental to the health of man.

Ethyl contains in each gallon about as much lead as the weight of a sixpenny-piece—of which, according to the evidence of the Research Association, one-third to two-thirds is given off in the exhaust, "in a finely divided state" and "sufficiently soluble to be almost entirely dissolved in the exhaust water." Dr. Coplans tells the public that—

Each and every car using ethyl petrol in a public thoroughfare is emitting this quantity of lead into the atmosphere, and the conditions in narrow streets with tall buildings, in the neighbourhood of traffic blocks, or in vehicular tunnels become a matter of the gravest concern in this densely populated country.

Motor engines emit another poison in the form of carbon monoxide gas, but this gas "rapidly diffuses away into the surrounding atmosphere." Lead dust, on the other hand, he says, is sticky and hangs about; and if it is deposited on the ground in garages or on roads may cause "surface pollution of water supplies."

There are certain hints which Dr. Coplans gives and which those using ethyl would do well to follow for the time being. The first is to avoid exposing the bare skin to ethyl or the oil from the crankcases and the deposit from the cylinders of engines in which it is consumed. The second is to warn laundries when clothing which has been in contact with ethyl is sent to be washed. The third is for women, from their great susceptibility to the effects of lead, to