

For the first Editorial of the second volume, in January 1977, I returned to *The Infamy of Disaster Relief* about which I had written previously [see Title 81]. I had pleaded in vain for the establishment of an International Rescue Organisation, the I R O and had concluded that neither Governments nor voluntary organisations had any interest in a more modern, scientifically and technologically organised manner of rescuing the thousands of sufferers from natural or man-made disasters which were bound to occur during the future.

In this Editorial I suggested that the World Health Organisation should take on the function of an IRO and employ the Medical Services of the Armed Forces of its Member States. It appeared to me an exceedingly simple and workable solution to the problem of efficient and speedy disaster relief, but, as I had expected, an Editorial in a scientific Journal cannot fight international bureaucracy and the UN Establishment.

Lord Ashby FRS, a founder member of our Editorial Board, had been the first chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and together with the historian Dr Mary Anderson contributed three articles on *The Historical Roots of the British Clean Air Act, 1956*. The first contribution on *The Awakening of Public Opinion over Industrial Smoke 1843-1853* had appeared in ISR 1/4 and his final article on *The Ripening of Public Opinion 1898-1952* was published in ISR 2/3. The second article which was in issue, ISR 2/1, was entitled *The Appeal to Public Opinion over Domestic Smoke, 1880-1892*. These three articles were later expanded by Lord Ashby and Dr Anderson into a book for the Cambridge University Press.

In this, his second article, Lord Ashby wrote that by the 1880s it had become evident that the severe 'pea soup' fogs in London was smoke caused by domestic fires, which were not covered by any laws. A succession of severe fogs, coupled with the publication of mortality rates, equal to those of cholera, led to the creation of a smoke abatement lobby. The work of this group and its sustained efforts, ten attempts in nine years, was then described.

The choice before Londoners, he continued, was either to change from open fires to closed stoves burning coke or anthracite, or to continue to enjoy the 'pokeable, companionable' open grate at the cost of fogs, causing deaths, illness and paralysis of transport. In the 1880s the technology for smoke control was available, but social resistance prevented its application. As Editor, I contributed a drawing, 'Bird's eye view as seen from a balloon, 1884' which showed dramatically the extreme air pollution of South London. The Clean Air Act of 1956, and central heating by oil or gas, ended the London fog.