

Mr. ROBIN COOK,
Chief Opposition Spokesman on
Health & Community Care,
COMMENTING GENERALLY TO
OUR CORRESPONDENT DURING
THE LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

The Department of Health, said Mr. Cook, would be renamed the Department of Health and Community Care to emphasise its commitment to providing strong social as well as health services. No government department is more relevant to old people, said Mr. Cook, because half of all hospital admissions are old people. He added that one thing which distresses him personally is that the generation which created the NHS finds too often that it turns them away.

Mr. Cook pledged that under a future Labour government, the country would have a properly funded health service, one which gives attention to those in need of chronic care as well as those who need "a quick fix and a fast cure." Special grants would be earmarked to fund care in the community, and local authorities would be offered the chance to work in partnership with central government rather than be subordinated to it.

Referring to the controversial issue of hospitals opting out of the NHS, Mr. Cook said that the present government would not be able to complete their programme between now and the next election, though he had not the slightest doubt that if re-elected that would be one of the very first things the Conservatives would do. But Labour had the opportunity to stop them, i.e. by winning the next election! In the event of a Conservative victory, the first priority of any future Labour government in the health field would be to bring any hospitals that have opted out back into the NHS.