

The Midwife.

THE CASE FOR A MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

The National Baby Week Council (27A, Cavendish Square, London, W. 1) have done wisely to place on record, in pamphlet form (Leaflet No. 13), the case for a Ministry of Health as stated in the House of Lords on July 17th by Lord Willoughby de Broke, and accepted by that House.

Lord Willoughby de Broke's resolution was:— "That this House urges His Majesty's Government to introduce at an early date a Bill to constitute a Ministry of Health."

In his foreword to the Leaflet Lord Willoughby de Broke says that the resolution was accepted by Lord Peel on behalf of the Government, and passed by the House of Lords without a dissident. He continues:—

In its unanimous desire to create a Ministry of Health, the House of Lords is fortified by the large mass of enlightened public opinion. There is one voice that must be heard above all. The formation of a Ministry of Health in this country had long been the nearest project to the heart of Lord Rhondda. He has told us that the Prime Minister was heart and soul in favour of the movement. Had he lived, Lord Rhondda was to have introduced the Bill in the House of Lords.

The revision of the draft, after much postponement, has been completed, but Parliament has risen and the Bill has not been introduced; nor has Mr. Bonar Law mentioned it as part of the business after the adjournment. No one who wishes to see a Ministry of Health created will be wise to relax the utmost efforts until the Bill is introduced and passed. The chief difficulty is the adjustment of departmental authority. It may be natural that those who take pride in duties long and faithfully performed should be reluctant to abandon them to others. There may even be a legitimate rivalry between Departments for the honour of being associated with the Ministry of Health. But all this will surely give way to something more important. The true servant of the public will be the first to agree that the pathway of knowledge should not be barred by an entanglement of Red Tape.

The War has taught us that science has been given too low a place in the service of the State. It is hoped that this Bill will promote Medical Science and skill to the high places of responsibility and power, so that they may direct and prosper the most important aspect of National Welfare.

A CONFERENCE.

A Conference convened by the National Baby Week Council will be held on Wednesday, September 18th, at 5 p.m., at Bedford College, York Gate, Regent's Park, N.W., the chief object of which will be to provide speakers in the Autumn Campaign with the arguments for, and the possible solution of, the problems involved in the creation of a Ministry of Health. Amongst them, of course, the work of midwives finds place.

DEATHS OF INFANTS IN REGISTERED HOMES.

The fact that four infants have died in the course of a week at a home registered under the London County Council, in Courthill-road, Lewisham, was mentioned at Lewisham, on Saturday, when an inquest was held on the body of one of them, Bertha Pawfey, aged three weeks, the daughter of a parlourmaid.

Mr. H. R. Oswald, the coroner, said the death had apparently resulted from enteritis, but the cause of the trouble being uncertain, the people keeping the home were anxious for a public inquiry.

It was stated in evidence that on August 29th the baby was suddenly seized with sickness and died on September 3. She had been fed on milk and barley water like the other children.

Mrs. Johnson, certified midwife, who keeps the home, said the home was registered under the London County Council. Three children, she stated, including Bertha Pawfey, died after sickness, and another, two months old, from convulsions. There were five other children in the home, but they were not affected.

The coroner asked if there were many flies about, and witness replied. "We are rather bothered with flies, but I take special care that the milk is not contaminated by them."

Dr. R. V. Donnellan, police divisional surgeon, who made a post-mortem examination, attributed death to syncope following acute diarrhoea. He said at this time of year very rapid changes took place in the condition of milk, and although it might be sterilised and taste sweet it was difficult sometimes to detect mischief in it. If it were all curdled it would set up trouble in a very young infant. It might be that an unlucky consignment or two of milk had caused the trouble in the home.

Dr. I. P. Kelly, of Lee, corroborated Dr. Donnellan's evidence. He added that he had attended the children in the home, and when the second one died had sent the sample of the milk to the public analyst, but had not yet received his report on it.

The jury returned a verdict of death from natural causes.

Well deserved sentences of twelve months' and four months' imprisonment in the second division, were passed at Wood Green on Monday on James Ellsnore and Alice Hanley, alias Benson and Stanton of Westbury Avenue, Wood Green, who pleaded guilty to advertising for babies for adoption for a sum of money, and then re-advertising them for other people to adopt for a smaller sum. In one case £45 was received with a baby, and on the same day it was surrendered for £15. In sentencing the prisoners, Mr. Biron described the fraud as most heartless and cruel.

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