

POWERS OF HEALTH COMMITTEES.

If the local health committees were concerned only in the administration of benefits to insured persons, or deposit contributors, the importance of the proportionate representation on these committees would not be so great. But the following are the duties imposed by the Bill on the local health committee:—

(1) It shall consider generally the needs of the county or county borough with regard to all questions of public health, and may make such reports and recommendations with regard thereto as it may think fit.

(2) It shall make such provision for the giving of lectures and the publication of information on questions relating to health as it thinks necessary or desirable.

Is a committee composed principally of members of approved societies and deposit contributors the best authority to deal with "all questions of public health" in a county or county borough? We believe that if the best work is to be done by these committees, the representation of those whose work is concerned with the public health must be substantially increased.

TRAINED NURSES INDISPENSABLE PUBLIC SERVANTS.

Next to the members of the medical profession no class of the community could render more effective and valuable service on the health committees than the trained nurses of the country, whose co-operation is essential to the efficient working of the Act, moreover, they are in intimate touch with the classes with which the Bill is principally concerned, and they have special and expert knowledge of many questions of public health. As district nurses, school nurses, factory nurses, health visitors, and infant life protection visitors, and in other branches of nursing, they come into intimate touch with all sections of the community, and, in addition, they are the trusted friends of the people who will speak more unreservedly to the trained nurse than to anyone else, the doctor not excepted.

We hope, therefore, that before the National Insurance Bill becomes law, an alteration in the constitution of the health committees will be adopted, and that both trained nurses and midwives will be accorded representation upon them.

Medical Matters.

THE CONTROL OF VENEREAL DISEASES.

The American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis, which, under the leadership of Dr. Prince Morrow, of New York, is endeavouring to break the current silence on the social evil, and to find scientific and humane means for preventing vice, as well as the diseases which accompany it, is now considering the Health Department's control of venereal diseases.

The Shield reports at length an interesting discussion on the subject at a meeting of the Society, which was opened by Professor Gerrish, who maintained that the law ought to require the reporting of syphilis and gonorrhoea to the health authorities. He pointed out that as our knowledge of communicable diseases has extended of recent years we have included more and more diseases in the group which the health authorities require to be reported, until now, in New York, it embraces diphtheria, scarlet fever, measles, chicken-pox, pulmonary tuberculosis, typhoid fever, typhus fever, whooping cough, cholera, and scarlet fever.

Speaking of syphilis and gonorrhoea, he said: "The ready communicability, the menace to life and health, and the prevalence and wide diffusion of these diseases, seem to support my thesis that the law ought to require the reporting of syphilis and gonorrhoea to the health authorities. Any argument that can be adduced in favour of reporting other diseases applies with even greater force to these. Society has a right to protection from them. The safety of the people is the supreme law."

Dealing with some of the objections advanced to notification, the Professor said:—"It is objected that a law should be the expression of the deliberate will of the majority, and that the proposed statutes are not called for." He pointed out: "It is hardly thinkable that if people generally knew, as they should know, the perils of syphilis and gonorrhoea they would not insist upon the suggested addition to the law."

Another objection mentioned and answered was that "the code of ethics of the medical profession forbids the revelation of facts obtained by the physician in the privacy of the consulting room." Professor Gerrish's answer to this is that "a code which prescribes protection of the guilty at the cost of the health and life of the innocent, conspicuously requires revision. The medical profession as a whole has too long given its tacit sanction to deeds which excite in its individual members abhorrence. It has permitted base men to take

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