

## THE CENTRAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE.

The 40th Annual Conference of the Poor Law Guardians was held in the Holborn Town Hall, on Tuesday and Wednesday, the 13th and 14th inst., presided over by the Rt. Hon. Charles Booth, F.R.S. The subjects of the papers on the first day were the Poor Law and Old Age Pensions, and the Poor Law and the National Insurance Act. The President, who stated in his opening address that as he had never been a guardian his position was merely that of an onlooker, considered that the drastic changes suggested by the majority and minority Reports on the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws would increase expenditure without ensuring increased efficiency and would destroy much that is good that could not easily be replaced. He said: "I have no sympathy with the view that whatever the Poor Law touches it defiles. As a rule the mass of the people though disposed to grumble at the rates, do not object to the comforts and conveniences provided for the sick and old under the Poor Law. They are kindly disposed, sympathetic towards helplessness and suffering, and set a value on their own home lives above any other institutional privileges. As regards administration, it is recognised as in practice impossible to allow the standard of medical care or sheer physical comfort to be lowered in any institution."

The Rev. P. S. G. Propert, Chairman of the Fulham Board of Guardians, in his paper on Old Age Pensions, drew attention to the overlapping of relief, and stated that in one Union a number of old age pensioners were said to reside in the Infirmary for considerable periods, during which time their pensions were allowed to accumulate; then they took their discharge. Then they drew their accumulated pension, spent it as they pleased and returned to the Infirmary. "Guardians," he said, "are to-day blamed for abuses which are entirely due to the Treasury. Surely the time has arrived when we shall not be content only to defend our position, but to march out to the attack and demand such amendment in the law as will free our institutions from gross abuse."

Mr. Thomas Smith, Barrister-at-Law and Clerk to the West Ham Board of Guardians, dealt with the Insurance Act. He pointed out that the medical benefit is confined to domiciliary treatment, and will in no way relieve the pressure on hospital and infirmary accommodation. As soon as an insured person becomes too ill to be treated at home many will still doubtless be admitted to Poor Law Infirmarys. Speaking on the Improvement of the Conditions under which people live, he said: "Any measure which can secure an improvement in the condition under which the poor work and live must impede the growth of pauperism, for insanitary crowded dwellings and ill-ventilated, unhealthy work-rooms have in the past been the certain harbingers of relief."

On the second day of the Conference the subject of the Papers was the After-care of "Poor Law Children," which were read by Miss G. R. Egerton, of the G.F.S. and also a member of the Ticehurst Board of Guardians; Miss Daglish, Secretary of the M.A.B.Y.S., and Mr. Henry F. New respectively.

Miss Egerton considered that in dealing with girls it would be well to make use of the existing societies rather than to start new ones on their behalf.

Miss Daglish hoped that the day would come when the Local Government Board would have a special department for the After-care of Poor Law Children.

Dr. John Grimes, speaking of emigration, argued that if *all* the children that are good and capable and healthy could be drafted off to Canada, this would be but lowering the average of those that remain. We should be encouraging the survival here of the unfit, we should be making more intolerable the burden of incapables, and increasing the number of unemployables in our midst.

The unexpected announcement that Earl Grey, the ex-Governor General of Canada, would address the meeting was hailed with loud applause.

He said there were in Canada large numbers of childless homes waiting for the homeless child. "Canada wants the best it can get." (A voice: "I daresay it does.")

During the discussion it was argued that if the Colonies wanted our children they should pay for them, and it was not fair that the mother country should bear the burden of their up-bringing and be required to part with them as soon as they reached adult life. Healthy children were the greatest asset of any nation.

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## HELP FOR HOSPITALS.

Congratulations—to King Edward's Fund—Mr. Montague G. Jessett bequeaths it £40,000.

To Leicester General Infirmary—for splendid legacy of £90,000 from the late Mr. Alfred Adderley.

Also to the group of Dublin Charities which benefit each to the extent of £600, under the will of the late Mr. W. Milward-Jones.

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## THE CHILD STUDY SOCIETY.

The Child Study Society, London, the objects of which are the scientific study of the mental and physical condition of children, and also the educational methods, with a view to gaining greater insight into child-nature, and securing more sympathetic and scientific methods of training the young, has arranged a course of Lectures and Discussions on the Psychology of Some School Subjects, to be delivered at the Royal Sanitary Institute, 90, Buckingham Palace Road; S.W. The first lecture was given on "Control during Adolescence," by Captain A. St. John, on February 13th, at 7.30 p.m.

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