

Mr. Percy Simmons described the action taken by the Public Control Committee after receiving a letter from the Commissioner of the Police in 1913, as to the Massage scandals, and the general policy of the Council; and Miss Lucy Robinson spoke, as representing the trained masseuses.

That closed the case for the L.C.C.

THE CASE FOR THE BOROUGH COUNCILS.

Mr. Freeman then called witnesses for the Borough Councils, stating that he would address their Lordships afterwards.

Dr. Francis John Allan, M.O.H. for the City of Westminster, claimed that since the notification of births began in 1907 the various boroughs have been gradually developing the care of women in childbirth, and children. He expressed the opinion that the Bill as it stands will cause a needless amount of reduplication of inspection and visiting, which only tends to inefficiency and friction, and that it will cause extra expense which is quite unnecessary, and even if the County Council had the extra staff they are not in the position, and have not the necessary information or means of obtaining it, to carry out the objects of the Bill.

The same line was taken by Mr. T. H. Royston Evans, Alderman in the Borough of Fulham, who suggested in place of the present proposals a slight extension of the existing powers of the Borough Councils in relation to disorderly houses. Dr. J. C. Jackson, the Medical Officer of Health for the Borough, expressed similar views.

The Committee then rose. When it met again on Friday, October 8th, the first witness was Mr. John Hunt, Town Clerk of the City of Westminster, who objected to the proposals of the Bill as an encroachment on the existing powers and duties of the Borough Councils, which already possess the necessary staff and machinery for executing the powers and duties sought by the Bill. These Councils are, he said, already alarmed at the increase of cost of central administration in London. If the powers given under Part V, *i.e.*, in relation to massage and kindred establishments are administered by the Borough Councils, there will be no additional expense except that of prosecution.

In cross examination Mr. Fitzgerald questioned the witness as to the encroachment he alleged on the powers of the Borough Councils, and witness replied that there would be an overlapping of jurisdiction and an interference with powers they already possess. It was put to him that a Borough Council has at present no power to suppress a lying-in home improperly carried on, or if the manager or owner is a person of bad character. "Supposing," he was asked, "it was ascertained that a home was being carried on by a woman previously a prostitute?" Witness replied that if the woman was previously a prostitute but had reformed, of course they would not stop her. It would not be necessary "Suppose," asked Counsel, "she had been convicted of procuring young girls?" Witness replied they would keep a very close look out on her.

Mrs. Mary Watkinson, Health Visitor for the City of Westminster, and Miss Mary Elizabeth Bibby, Sanitary Inspector in the Borough of St. Pancras, who work under the supervision of the Medical Officers of Health in those areas expressed views in agreement with those of their chiefs.

The last witness was Dr. Charles Porter, barrister-at-law and M.O.H. for the Borough of Marylebone, who gave the number of lying-in homes, apart from hospitals, in that area which would be registered as 3, but said that a certain number of Nursing Homes taking maternity cases will also have to be registered.

This closed the evidence, and Mr. Freeman then addressed the Committee on behalf of the Borough Councils, beginning by saying that the issues were so plain that no long argument would be of assistance to their Lordships. His clients regarded the Bill as important. Part V dealt with a very serious evil, and the Boroughs were desirous to have a remedy applied, but the duplication of authorities was more than unnecessary, it was actually pernicious.

Mr. Fitzgerald, on the other hand, submitted that the question was whether powers should be given to one authority or to twenty-eight. He pointed out that twelve of these Councils had expressed no desire to have them, and would, therefore, hardly be likely to carry them out, if conferred upon them, very actively.

The Committee Room was then cleared. On re-admission of the public, the Chairman asked Mr. Fitzgerald whether, in the event of his clients getting this Bill the London County Council would make use of the services of the officers of the Borough Councils for purposes of inspection.

The learned Counsel replied that he had no instructions on the point from the London County Council, and was not aware that they had ever considered, so he could not answer the question for or against.

The chairman then said:

"The Committee share to the full the desire of the London County Council, and of the Borough Councils alike, that the evils which Parts IV and V of the Bill are designed to remedy are evils which should be promptly suppressed. We are much indebted to Counsel on both sides for the ability and completeness with which they have presented their case. Considering the urgency of the question, the Committee are of opinion that the Bill should be allowed to proceed."

The London County Council thus obtained the powers they sought.

Mr. Freeman then asked whether their Lordships would be prepared to give the London County Council power to delegate its powers to the Borough Councils, such as was given in the Midwives Act to the Central Midwives Board. This was agreed.

No doubt the L.C.C. will for the present keep these powers in its own hands, but another Council might be influenced at elections or otherwise to delegate them. The matter is therefore now "subject to politics."

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