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EDITORIAL.

ORGANISATION OF MEDICAL MEASURES AGAINST VENEREAL DISEASES.

"If preventible why not prevented?"

Only those who know something of the prevalence of venereal diseases, their serious nature, and disastrous consequences, can estimate the urgency for a comprehensive scheme for their treatment, yet the present provision is so inadequate as to be practically non-existent. Thus the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases which issued its final report last March found that the effects of venereal disease upon the individual, and the race, are grave and far reaching, involving a heavy loss to the community in actual and potential population, as well as in money, and that the medical evidence they had received established the fact that, by early and efficient treatment, venereal disease could be brought within narrow limits, but at present this is in most cases unduly deferred, that adequate facilities for the best modern treatment do not exist, and that to bring it to bear on every infected person Government action is essential.

The Local Government Board, whose President, Mr. Walter Long, is deeply interested in the question, has now issued regulations under the Public Health Acts requiring County Councils and County Borough Councils to organize, and carry into effect, schemes for the provision of facilities for the diagnosis and treatment of venereal diseases.

Under the regulations of the Local Government Board the duty is imposed on the county and county borough councils of providing, or arranging for the provision of free facilities for diagnosis and treatment, and the Board state that in view of the findings of the Royal Commission they are of opinion that the conditions of the present war constitute a "case of emergency" which

justifies them in calling upon these councils to carry out a work which is specially important when the services of every man are required.

These Councils are required to make arrangements enabling any medical practitioner practising in their respective areas to obtain, free of cost to himself and his patients, examinations of pathological material; and Wassermann tests on the blood serum of patients, both for the diagnosis of syphilis, and as a control of the effect of treatment. Seventy-five per cent. of the cost incurred will be repaid by the Local Government Board.

It is anticipated that the scheme will comprise the establishment of special clinics for the treatment of venereal diseases at one or more hospitals within the area of the Council concerned, which will be available for all applicants, irrespective of their means, or place of residence. These clinics are not to be specially designated as for venereal diseases, and nothing is to be done to distinguish those who attend.

Every effort is to be made to secure the co-operation of private practitioners and Salvarsan, or its substitutes, is to be supplied gratuitously to those qualified to administer it.

In addressing the general hospitals the Local Government Board say that the measures recommended by the Royal Commission cannot be successful without the active co-operation of the general hospitals of the country.

Lastly the Councils are recommended to form Committees, comprising social workers—including a sufficient number of suitable women—and representatives of the local medical committees, for the purpose of disseminating information as to the scheme, and for making suggestions to the Council concerned. It seems therefore that a well organized effort is at last to be made to combat these diseases.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)