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**EDITORIAL.**

**THE HEALTH OF THE NATION.**

There have been high hopes on many sides, that when Parliament reassembled, a Bill providing for the establishment of a Ministry of Public Health, prepared by the President of the Local Government Board, and supported by other Government Departments would be brought in and quickly become law.

It is, however, evident that these hopes will not be fulfilled during the war, for the Prime Minister, replying to an influential deputation which waited on him last week to urge upon him the establishment of a Ministry of Health, replied as follows:

"With regard to the proposed Health Bill, it is quite clear, however urgent it may be, you cannot introduce a bill of the kind proposed in the middle of a war. I am the last man to contend that it is not an urgent matter. You have to repair the ravages of war, and strict attention paid to the health of the community is one of the most effective methods of attaining that end. We shall have to apply a new spirit to proposals of that kind, otherwise we shall never repair in our day, or in the days of our children, the ravages of this war. But if we concentrate on these problems in the right spirit we shall not merely clear the devilry of war, we shall not merely restore, we shall build something greater and on a firmer foundation than we have had before.

"But it is not merely a question of appointing a Ministry of Health. Many other questions are involved. For instance, what is the position of the Local Government Board in relation to the scheme? What is the position of the Local Authorities? How are you going to decide the relationship of the Local Government Board and the Local Authorities to the

Ministry of Health? What will be the relationship of the Insurance and other Committees to the Ministry? Questions of that kind must be raised, and such questions must raise all manner of opposition and very searching investigation—investigation of a kind you cannot undertake in the hour of war. I am certain that in one form or another you must drastically revise the administration of our health laws; you must revise those laws themselves. There are conditions existing which are perfectly incompatible with the health of the nation, and we all know them. It is a perfect scandal and disgrace that a nation which has shown such capacity for meeting emergencies should have shown such lethargy, should have tolerated such conditions, to get rid of which would not have caused a millionth part of the energy put into the war. It is incredible that such a nation should have allowed those slums and misery, and wretchedness, which are a stain on the flag, which is the glory of our race. We cannot allow it, and if this war did nothing but make us alive to the fact that the preservation of the national health is the greatest asset to the Empire, that it is part of its strength, it would have taught us a vital lesson. The people to enjoy liberty must be fit to defend it, and that is one of the problems of the future. Partly by legislation with regard to housing, and partly by sound, efficient administration, I hope to see in this country, even as a result of the war—when you come to write the great balance-sheet—that in its debit of death and its credit of health the balance will be in favour of life."

We hope that one of the first acts of the Government after the war, will be to introduce legislation which will remove conditions which are stated by the Prime Minister to be incompatible with the health of the nation, and a scandal and disgrace.

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