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EDITORIAL.

SAVE THE CHILDREN.

No classes of the community know better than nurses and midwives how essential a pure and sufficient milk supply is to the well-being of infants and young children—the nation's priceless asset—and now that a shortage of milk threatens the public in the near future it behoves them to do all in their power to help to educate public opinion in the necessity for giving priority in its distribution to young children, and sick and aged persons.

Now that the principle of rationing in regard to certain articles has been established, the Food Controller perhaps will go a step further and set up a system whereby infants and sick people will have the first claim on the limited milk supply at a price that will be within reach of the poor. At present the price, in some districts, of 7d. a quart renders its purchase in sufficient quantities prohibitive to a large number of the working classes.

A great deal is said just now about the comparative affluence of these classes, and to a limited extent this is true; but, on the other hand, the high prices of food swallow up the excess on the earnings. Further, there is a numerous class who are in no sense benefiting from higher wages, and to whom the increased cost of living is a standing burden.

Among these are the married women, soldiers' wives, whose numerous young children render wage earning impossible for them, widows under like conditions, and the physically unfit.

Again there are the foster mothers who have the care of illegitimate infants. The milk bill, taking the present maximum price, for a child of twelve months old should amount to at least 4s. a week, *i.e.*, about two-thirds of the total sum the

mother is able to pay for its entire maintenance and nurture. It is perfectly plain, that unless steps are taken in good time to ensure, to the working and middle-class mothers, milk at a reasonable charge that their growing children are bound to suffer severely during the coming winter.

Healthy adults should make the sacrifice cheerfully in favour of the little people, for not only the price stands in the way of their obtaining this essential food, but the plain fact, that there will possibly not be enough to go round.

It is fervently to be hoped that depots may be established in the poorer districts where those who have the care of young children and sick persons can obtain milk at a reasonable figure and in a reasonable time, and that the procedure that obtained during the past year before mothers could obtain sugar for their young children will at all costs be avoided in regard to milk.

Mr. Hayes Fisher, President of the Local Government Board, informed the deputation from Urban and Rural District Councils Association who "advocated that wider powers should be given to local authorities with regard to maternity and child welfare," that "undoubtedly local authorities ought to have power, in certain selected places, to obtain a supply of milk for nursing mothers." It is, however, the babies who have no nursing mothers whose claim is greatest.

They will be poor patriots who do not rouse themselves to concern in this matter. Much can be done by representations to local authorities. It is up to each civilian to do his share for the common weal, by self-sacrifice, and otherwise. Our brave men at the front should at least be assured that the care of their little ones is felt to be the bounden duty of the men and women who stay at home in comparative ease.

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