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EDITORIAL.

A MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

The formation of a Ministry of Health which has so often been advocated in this Journal is being urged both by the British Medical Association and the Association of Approved Societies under the National Insurance Act.

The Council of the British Medical Association reported to the Annual Representative Meeting on July 26th that they had considered the matter of action on the part of the Local Government Board to stimulate local authorities to provide midwives and nurses for expectant mothers, and medical attendance and treatment for children under five years of age. The Council are of opinion that the only possible method of placing the health administration of the country on a sound basis is by the creation of a Ministry of Health. They recommend

"That a Ministry of Health should be created to take over from existing Government departments such duties as are concerned with the health of the community, and to deal with those duties only; and that the administrative functions of the Ministry should be carried out by a board presided over by a Minister of Cabinet rank;

That the country should be divided into suitable administrative areas under local administrative health centres consisting of representatives (a) of the rating authorities; (b) of the education authorities; (c) of the persons contributing to a scheme of health insurance (including employers of labour); (d) the medical profession; (e) public hospitals; (f) dentists; (g) pharmacists; and (h) nurses;

That the principal medical officers of each centre should be two, of equal status, one representing the clinical side (chief clinical officer) and the other the preventive side of medicine (medical officer of health);

that the duties of the chief clinical officer should be to advise on all questions of medical treatment, and should include the administration of the working of treatment centres and clinics of all kinds; that the duties of the medical officer of health should be those connected with vital statistics and preventive medicine generally, in the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases, and with the investigation of the causes of preventable diseases;

That for each area, hospitals, clinics, or treatment centres should be recognised or established at which persons entitled to treatment under the public scheme should be able to obtain institutional, consultative, or specialist services on the recommendation of their medical attendant; that the continued existence of voluntary hospitals would be necessary, and should be encouraged; that an agreed annual sum should be paid by the local administrative health committee to voluntary hospitals in respect of treatment given to patients entitled to treatment under the public scheme;

That the main responsibility for treatment should be in the hands of the consulting and visiting practitioners, to be paid for their services by a method dependant upon the number of patients for whom they accept responsibility."

Dr. Garstang, who moved the recommendation of the Council, stated that Lord Rhondda, when President of the Local Government Board, suggested to a deputation that such a Ministry should be formed, and asked its members to immediately forward to him any recommendations they had to make, as he was shortly submitting a scheme to the Cabinet. As the matter was urgent the draft scheme had been forwarded to the Prime Minister and to the various Government Departments concerned. The formation of a Ministry of Health was approved.

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