

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,557.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1918.

Vol. LX.

EDITORIAL.

THE ABOLITION OF THE POOR LAW UNION.

Few people will regret that the knell of the present poor law system has sounded, and that the abolition of Boards of Guardians is imminent, for while many individual Guardians have rendered invaluable service to the community, they would be the first to own that they were hampered by the system under which they worked, which is detested alike by those whom it is designed to benefit, and by thoughtful students of social problems, who realize its inherent weakness in aiming at the relief, instead of the prevention, of destitution, so that the timely aid which would prevent destitution must be withheld, which, alike from the point of view of sound administration and of consideration for the individual in difficulties, is bad business.

The Committee appointed by the Right Honble. Christopher Addison, M.P., Minister of Reconstruction, "To consider and report upon the steps to be taken to secure the better co-ordination of public assistance in England and Wales, and upon such other matters affecting the system of Local Government as may from time to time be referred to it," of which Sir Donald Maclean, K.B.E., M.P., is chairman, have issued their report on the "Transfer of Functions of Poor Law Authorities in England and Wales," in which they point out not only that there are many public authorities dispensing assistance out of rates and taxes, but new ones are frequently being improvised to meet emergencies. The most intractable case of overlapping being that of the Boards of Guardians on the one hand, and the County, Municipal, and other Health and Education Authorities on the other.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

They therefore recommend:—(1) The abolition of the Boards of Guardians and

of the Poor Law Union, and the merging of all the functions of the Poor Law Authorities in those of the County Council and the County Borough Council.

(2) The unification of Existing Services.

(a) The provision at the expense of the rates, with or without Exchequer Grants, for the sick and infirm (including maternity and infancy and the aged requiring institutional care, and all institutions appropriated to any of these) should be made by the Council under Public Health Acts, suitably extended. The Council should organize such preventive and curative treatment as the cases require by means of their specialized institutions and medical staff.

(b) The provision for all children able to attend school (including residential and special schools of all kinds) should be regarded as predominantly a matter of educational training, and should be made by the Local Education Authority under the Education Acts suitably extended.

(c) The provision for the mentally deficient and for persons of unsound mind, whether certified or not, including all institutions appropriated to those classes, should be made by the Council under the Lunacy and Mental Deficiency Acts extended, and through the Committee or Committees administering their powers under these Acts.

A further recommendation of the Committee is that the County or County Borough Council should be required to appoint a new Committee to be styled "the Home Assistance Committee" formed on the lines of the Education Committee (including persons experienced in the work to be done, and, in the first instance, some who have been members of the Poor Law Authorities) which should be charged with the duty of making the necessary inquiries into the economic circumstances of applicants for, or recipients of, any form of assistance in money, kind, or service.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)