

## THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

### DISEASE PREVENTION.

When the House of Commons went into Committee of Supply on Thursday, July 15th, Dr. Addison, the Minister of Health, moved "that a sum not exceeding £17,572,797 be granted to His Majesty to complete the sum necessary to defray the charge which will come in course of payment during the year ending on March 31st, 1921, for the salaries and expenses of the Ministry of Health, including grants and other expenses in connection with Housing, Grants to Local Authorities, etc., sundry contributions and grants in respect of Benefits and Expenses of Administration under the National Insurance (Health) Acts, 1911 to 1919, certain Grants in Aid, and certain Special Services arising out of the war."

In moving this resolution, Dr. Addison reminded the Committee that this was the first time the estimates of the Ministry of Health have been presented to it, and that during the first year of its life the Ministry of Health collected to itself a number of other Departments, so that it could proceed to consolidate in one Department all those interests concerned with the preservation and promotion of the public health, and also, so far as possible deleted from the work and the consideration of this Department, matters which are foreign to that purpose.

He referred, at the outset of his speech, to the serious loss which the Ministry has suffered in the first year of its work through the death of Sir Robert Morant, "who was at all times a loyal and trusted friend, a great servant of the public, and, besides this, was an example to us all of self-denying, far-sighted, resolute patriotism."

Dr. Addison mentioned as services which had been amalgamated during the course of the year those relating to the Health Insurance Department, the Registrar General, the work of the Board of Education in regard to school medical services and prospective mothers, the work of the Home Office under the Children Act, and—a very important branch of the public service—the Board of Control, which deals with the whole question of lunacy and other minor services.

### THE SIGNIFICATION OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

The Ministry, said Dr. Addison, is, or ought to be, or ought to grow into a Ministry of Health, and that word had a very wide signification. It entered into every home, and every life, from the first day to the last, and it was clear that a sound health policy would require time and patience for its development. The first essential in a well-defined health policy was the spread of good, common information for, after all, the foundation of many of our possibilities was in the home, and in the house.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF PREVENTION.

Then any sound system must be based upon the principle of prevention. So far as possible all our schemes must be designed with that dominant intention. It was in that respect that we had not hitherto made as much progress as we ought to have done, and it was with that idea running through his mind that he was going to put before the Committee a record of some of the branches of the work of the Ministry.

### THE NECESSITY FOR AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF TRAINED PERSONS.

The Minister proceeded to say that any proper development of a preventive health service must depend upon an adequate supply of trained persons, and there was, at present, in many branches a serious deficiency. It would take time to remove that want. You could not produce a trained staff—nurses, midwives, and so forth, in the course of a year. He was quite sure that we should often be spending our time and money in vain, unless we rested on a well thought-out scheme, administered by people who knew what they were wanting to do.

Then, any systematic preventive scheme of service must offer fairly full facilities for dealing with early disability, and, above all, it must have at its service at all time an active prosecution of scientific research. The preventive services we have developed in this country had, up to the present, so far as they related to the surroundings of individuals, reached a stage of development beyond that of any other. Our sanitary services, so called, were well developed, and it was largely owing to them that the health of our people, who in many cases dwelt in most pestilential places, was as good as it is, and it was from this point of view—that of dealing with the surroundings of the people—that the housing work, which was only one of the many activities of the Ministry, although it bulked largely in the public eye, must be regarded.

### A TEST OF SUCCESS.

Dr. Addison called attention to the point that in so far as the Ministry of Health was really successful, and as, in course of time, its services became more complete, and yield a better result, the less obvious and the less striking they will be. Nobody, when he went about his daily life, felt particularly grateful for the men who have swept out malaria. It did not occur to him. It was not objective. That was an essential feature of all preventive services, and therefore, as time went on, and the development of schemes became more successful they would become less objective, and bulk less in the public mind, and the less they did so the more successful they would be.

### THE PREVENTION OF DISEASE.

The Minister reported the success of the sanitary cordon drawn round the country at the time of the demobilisation of great numbers of troops, when vast tracts of Europe were devastated by disease,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)