

The Midwife.

THE DISMISSAL OF A HEALTH VISITOR.

The dismissal of Miss E. S. Daniels, Health Visitor under the Edmonton Urban Council, working at the Brookfield House Maternity and Child Welfare Centre, Edmonton, for alleged insubordination, opens up a very much wider question than the reason assigned. It is should Hygienic Birth Control Instruction be given at Maternity and Infant Welfare Centres?

Miss Daniels was first suspended from her duties at a meeting, over which Councillor W. C. Elms (Chairman of the Maternity Committee), presided, when she answered questions in respect to allegations that she had been giving mothers attending the Centre information regarding birth control, and she was asked to stop this alleged practice. Since then, she has been dismissed, and it may therefore be presumed that she has declined to refuse to inform mothers who ask for Birth Control information where they can obtain it.

The *Tottenham Weekly Herald* reports that the following petition is being signed in Edmonton:—

We residents of Edmonton, believing that some attempt must be made to cope with the increasing poverty and unemployment in our district, hereby request the Edmonton Urban District Council to make arrangements which will enable all women who desire it to receive information on the subject of birth control at the various maternity and child welfare centres under the control of the Council.

At a meeting recently held at the Town Hall, Edmonton, under the auspices of the Organised Women's Unemployment Committee, and addressed by Mrs. Drysdale (Hon. Secretary of the New Generation League), the following Resolution was carried unanimously:—

That this meeting of mothers and fathers of Edmonton wishes to protest against the action of the Edmonton Child Welfare Committee in suspending Miss Daniels for informing mothers where they can obtain birth control information when asked for it; and requests the Council to allow such information to be given whenever requested, or when advisable on grounds of health.

It is alleged by the *New Generation* that, when a deputation of the Unemployed Women's Committee attended the Council and stated that five hundred residents had signed a petition on behalf of Miss Daniels, and in favour of providing facilities for birth control, that Councillor Elms accused Miss Daniels of being an agent for selling contraceptives, and that she sold them in her working hours. This accusation was not made, or mentioned, when Miss Daniels appeared before the Committee, and is indignantly denied by her. The Dean of St. Paul's (Dean Inge) has expressed the following opinion to a contemporary:—

My own view is this: I do not think it right to

keep information from the uneducated poor which educated rich people already know.

I think the poor have a right to decide for themselves, and are quite able to do so.

I think that Miss Daniels, the Edmonton Health Visitor, ought to be reinstated.

Is it not time that, as a nation, we faced the question of Birth Control fairly and squarely?

From the social point of view, have parents the right to bring into the world children whom they have no prospects of being able to keep?

The lower we go down in the animal scale the greater the fertility, the less responsibility there is as to reproduction. Amongst human beings, in the poorer classes, irresponsibility also seems to exist, the consequence being the invalidity of mothers who cannot stand the strain of continual child bearing, and the death in early life of a large proportion of the children so born; also the number of feeble-minded children, who are a menace to the State, both because they frequently must be State supported, and, if at large, not only are they prolific, but are frequently the parents of illegitimate children.

It may be laid down as axioms—

That the artificial termination of pregnancy at any time after conception has occurred is unjustifiable.

That the control of conception is justifiable in the interests of the health of the individual and of the nation and on scientific grounds.

That general information as to the propriety of Birth Control may be given by anyone.

That advice to individuals should be given by the medical profession, and should be available for those who cannot afford to pay.

That it is hypocritical to give this advice and information to the well-to-do and to object to its being given to the poor.

That it is better to bear and rear two or three healthy children than to bear a large number who die in infancy, or grow up to be weaklings.

That if the information given by Miss Daniels was limited to informing women who desired Birth Control information where they could obtain it, that she was within her right in so doing. This is nominally, at any rate, a free country.

That under these circumstances the Minister of Health should see that she is reinstated.

NATIONAL BABY WEEK.

The National Baby Week Council (Carnegie House, 117, Piccadilly, London, W.1) sent the following Resolution to the Ministry of Health:—

"That the matter of vaccination in relation to infant welfare is sufficiently urgent to merit the careful attention of the Ministry of Health, and that the Ministry should take all possible steps to promote more universal vaccination of children."

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