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EDITORIAL.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE.

Social Service is pregnant with meaning; it connotes an almost limitless field of beneficial and patriotic activities. The third Annual Report of the National Council of Social Service, which has just been issued, opens with the following words:—"Nothing has been more remarkable than the pace at which efforts to improve social conditions in this country has been maintained during the past twenty-five years. So far as State action is concerned, that effort is expressed in an unprecedented series of Acts of Parliament, and is reflected in a more than tenfold increase in public expenditure on Social Services. It is expressed, too, in a multiplication of voluntary associations through which individual citizens give 'uncovenanted service.'"

This, surely, is a very gratifying statement, and shows very clearly and unmistakably that the public conscience has, within the last quarter of a century, awakened to a sense of its responsibility as *our brother's keeper*.

This Community spirit, so beautifully awakened, must be fostered, if the purpose is to be fully realised. In order to effect this the above National Council was formed four years ago for the purpose—under a central group organisation—to co-ordinate the numerous existing agencies for Social Service, both voluntary agencies and statutory authorities, and to assist in the formation and development of local Councils.

To demonstrate the wide scope of the National Council, we give just a few of the Voluntary agencies affiliated to it: Rural Housing and Sanitary Association, Central Association for Mental Welfare, Borstal Association, National League for Health, Maternity and Child Welfare, Federation of Charity Organisation Societies, National Council of Women, Barnett House.

For the benefit of our readers, more especially Public Health Nurses, who are pre-eminently social workers, we give the origin and purpose of the last. It was established in Oxford as

a memorial to the late Canon Barnett, and was opened by the late Lord Bryce in June, 1914, in order to provide a centre for the study of modern social and economic problems, urban and rural. It would hardly be exaggerating its national importance to call it the University of Sociology. Lectures are given here by eminent men and women on every kind of subject of social interest. It is verily and indeed a clearing-house of valuable information, and is known to social workers of other countries who visit our shores. We advise nurses living or staying in Oxford to visit it.

Social Service! The term implies something higher than what is claimed for it. Such work, done in the right spirit, unalloyed with the pettiness of self-interest and jealousies, stands for practical Christianity, and we are glad to see colour given to this idea by the fact that the names of the Archbishop of York, and the Bishops of London, Oxford and Winchester are among the Hon. Associates of Barnett House.

In our opinion, the branch of Social Service which stands first in importance—without any desire to deprecate any other—is Public Health Nursing, which is both preventive and curative in purpose. Its three main sub-divisions—correlated and interdependent—are District Nursing, School Nursing, and Maternity and Child Welfare work. Who shall say how many valuable lives have been saved, and permanent debility and ill-health avoided, by the timely help of this group of social workers? We do not hesitate to say that it is fundamentally the greatest national asset of this or any other country, and we marvel at the short-sightedness, the ingratitude, the stupidity, and—shall we add—the lack of true patriotism of those in power, who not only permit, but aid and abet the lowering and degrading of the great Nursing Profession, even to the extent of violating an Act of Parliament! The dominant wrong which has produced this condition of things, namely, personal self-interest *versus* the good of the majority, which is the very antithesis of the principle underlying Social Service, can only be overcome by courage, selflessness, and *esprit de corps*.

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