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EDITORIAL.

THE NATIONAL HEALTH.

Important pronouncements were made on Tuesday by Mr. Neville Chamberlain, M.P., the Minister of Health, in his reply to a deputation from the People's League of Health, who submitted to him the resolutions passed at a conference convened by the League on the latest knowledge regarding causes, treatment and prevention of disease. The Minister stated:—

DIET LEAFLETS.—His department had already issued a pamphlet on diet available for the public. He contemplated that further pamphlets would be issued by the department which might be made the basis of popular leaflets by suitable bodies.

CONTROL OF INFANT FOODS.—He was advised that the public were getting far more careful about the kinds of prepared foods that they gave their children. He was considering the framing of regulations on this subject when other matters, more urgent in point of time, had been disposed of.

PRESERVATIVES IN FOOD.—He proposed to accept generally the recommendations of the Food Preservatives Committee.

SMOKE ABATEMENT.—He had already given Lord Newton an assurance that a Bill dealing with the abatement of the smoke nuisance would be introduced. If no suitable opportunity arose in the immediate future, he hoped to secure it an early place in the Government programme next year.

MENTAL DISORDER.—He reminded the deputation that, when in office before, he himself introduced a Bill which had provided for the early treatment of mental disorder. The fact that he had himself prepared the Bill was an earnest of his intentions in this matter.

SLEEPY SICKNESS.—With regard to the mental and moral deterioration of children who had suffered from encephalitis lethargica, he was informed that the Board of Education were about to make special provision for dealing with such children.

HOSPITAL SERVICES.—If what the deputation were anxious to secure was better co-ordination of hospital services, he was entirely at one with them. The object aimed at seemed to him unattainable without the reform of the Poor Law. This the Government had undertaken to deal with, and intended to press it forward as quickly as possible.

TUBERCULOSIS.—He quite recognised the risk of the spread of tuberculosis by adults suffering from the disease. He was prepared to give general powers to local authorities in the amending Public Health Bill, which he contemplated introducing as early as possible.

That Bill would be a preliminary to the consolidation of the Public Health Acts, and he hoped that it might be possible to get both those measures through in the coming Session.

MIDWIVES ACT.—He also hoped that, if not this Session, at any rate next, he would be able to get through a Bill amending the Midwives Act on lines suggested by the deputation.

CHILDREN ACT.—He hoped that early legislation on that subject also would be possible.

DIET.

Among the vital questions which we hope, and believe, will engage the attention of the present Parliament three stand out easily paramount—pure food, housing, and education—for the stamina, the health, the morality, and the mental development and efficiency of the Nation largely depend upon them.

The importance of pure food and right feeding can hardly be too strongly insisted upon, and we are glad to note that Sir Kingsley Wood, M.P., when recently entertained by the Faculty of Insurance, on his appointment to the post of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, emphasised the fact that we were still in the dark as to the causes of measles, influenza, rheumatism and cancer, that we had yet to learn the relationship of certain foods and particular diseases, and that we needed to-day not only cheap but good food which was vital to a healthy and vigorous race. It was further satisfactory that he stated the Ministry of Health was deeply concerned with the important question of pure food, and that good, clean, and wholesome food was an effective weapon against disease and premature death. He also said that the consumer to-day must be more and more protected against contaminated, adulterated, and disease-producing food, instancing in this connection dirty and dusty milk, the careless handling of meat and bread, doctored butter, the boron preserved sausage, the boracised egg, and the mixture of sugar, artificial flavouring and benzoic acid sometimes called ginger beer.

Sir Kingsley Wood further stated that the Minister of Health, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, had well in hand the matter of limiting and controlling the admixture of chemical preservatives and colouring matter with foodstuffs.

The public had recently been asked by the Ministry to refrain from the common practice of handling meat before purchasing. Might we draw the attention of the Ministry to the unpleasant, and not at all uncommon, practice of the shop assistant of licking her finger, to facilitate her opening the paper bag, when this is used, in which she inserts our bread or cakes?

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