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## EDITORIAL.

### THE WHITE PAPER ON THE HEALTH SERVICE.

During the past month we have been haunted by the White Paper on the Health Service scheme, issued by the Minister of Health, and with our strong sympathy with the value of individuality, hesitate to criticise the same.

Earth, Air, Fire and Water! All the elements play important parts in any scheme for the National Health Service; but it is the human atom which should control them all.

How far is this recognised by the White Paper which intimately comes into touch with medicine, nursing, domestic avocations, birth, parental responsibility, the evolution of the individual, human responsibility—public duty—patriotism and death? No scheme for a National Health Service, which enforces absolute Ministerial control, can possibly realise the development of health in its most effective sense. Care must, therefore, be secured for the participation of individual evolution in any health scheme which can hope to succeed in building a safe basic standard—medicine, nursing, domesticity, cannot make this claim too emphatically—whilst the White Paper is in embryo. We have studied carefully the opinions expressed in the Houses of Lords and Commons by legislators, whose duty it is to voice political opinion and note the Ministry of Health, responsible for the White Paper, encourages free discussion.

### Parliamentary Debate.

The Minister of Health, moving, in the House of Commons, "that this House welcomes the intention of His Majesty's Government, declared in the White Paper presented to Parliament, to establish a comprehensive National Health Service," suggested that a National Health Service should be regarded as one of the main pillars upon which the post-war social structure would rest; education, health, housing, social insurance, and there would, of course, be others. Each of those pillars needed to be well fashioned and well founded, and then the structure would be good. Education has already reached the stage of legislation, health had followed not too far behind, and it would not be long before social insurance reached the same stage. Thus the whole structure was steadily taking shape. Big as the scheme was, it was really to be regarded as part of a bigger process still, the process of reshaping the background of individual life in this country. It was really a counter-process to all the destructiveness of war. They were discussing that day a project which would be the biggest single advance ever made in this country in the sphere of public health.

### Object of the Plan.

The object of the new National Health Service was to fit the nation for its great responsibilities, to free its members, so far as it was humanly possible to do so, from the anxieties, the burdens and the pains of ill-health. It was a plan to raise national health to a higher plane and keep it there, and to use the nation's full resources to raise it ever higher.

In one or two places in the White Paper the word "free" occurred, but it was not really an appropriate word. Everyone would pay for a service for everyone and by three means—taxation, rates and the social insurance contribution. The only sense in which the word "free" was appropriate was that there would be no charge to those who used the service when they used it or because they used it.

The proposals in the White Paper were built around certain principles which the Government believed to be fundamental. The first principle was that of comprehensiveness. The whole range of health care must be made available to every person, starting with the family doctor and ranging through all kinds of clinic and domiciliary services to the consultant and the specialist—another service entirely absent at present in any organised form—and the hospital. He emphasised the immense advantage of including wives and children and not merely the insured contributor.

The second principle was the freedom of the individual. No one, patient or doctor, must be dragooned into any part of this service, or any form of treatment, unless they wanted to use it. There must be no compulsion of the doctors, or the nurses, or any others whose job it was to give the service. On the whole, professional people knew their own professional job best, and should be left as free as possible to practise it in their own way. A certain amount of organisation was essential. The State was taking the responsibility of providing the service and must see that it was there, when and where it was needed, but must do everything to see that organisation spelt neither bureaucracy nor red tape.

### Democratic Responsibility.

The third principle, which ran clearly through the whole of the White Paper, was the principle of democratic responsibility. The whole service must rest, both centrally and locally, with the elected representatives of the people—with Parliament and with Ministers directly responsible to Parliament, and with local government in the general sense in which we knew it in this country.

### Place of the Nursing Profession.

The fourth main principle was that of professional and vocational guidance. The ultimate responsibility must be fully democratic, but the whole service must

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