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EDITORIAL.

SERF LEGISLATION.

We opened our *Evening Standard* eagerly on Thursday, March 21, 1946, as the National Health Service Bill—a veritable bombshell—had been introduced into the House of Commons and issued in a White Paper by the Minister of Health, Mr. Aneurin Bevan.

"Low" had distinguished himself by a fine poster presenting Mr. Bevan as the "Laddie of the Lamp" representing "Aneurin Nightingale" fitting a new electric globe in the ceiling, the lamp relegated to the floor of a ward containing a contingent of B.M.A. Old Brigade in their busbies—an historic addition now placed in the History Section of the British College of Nurses, Ltd.

To quote: "The National Health Bill is out. It will cost £152,000,000 a year. It provides for the State to take over Doctors, Hospitals and Dentists. Free for all in 1948. The Bill comes under three main heads: the General Practitioner Service; the Facilities to be Provided by Hospitals which are Taken Over; and the New Health Centres. Publication of the plan will begin a great Parliamentary controversy which follows months of discussions outside Parliament. The big Parliamentary battles will be on the taking over of the Voluntary Hospitals, and the new conditions for the State Doctors. Suffice it is to say the National Health Service places the human entity under the heel of an absolutely despotic Government Department—the Ministry of Health. Before drafting his Bill, Mr. Bevan only saw the representatives of the medical profession twice and he informed them that he did not intend to negotiate with them. This will be recognised as the more extraordinary when it is remembered that the establishment of a complete National Health Service has long been desired by the doctors.

"The public are informed that this is a free service. This is, of course, all moonshine. The bill must be paid by someone; and it is the common man who will pay by his contributions, by his rates and taxes, and if he should venture to prefer the old personal relations, he will pay his fees also."

The *Sunday Graphic* states: "This scheme is so drawn as to constitute a vital threat to its own declared end and purpose. Every doctor worth his salt knows that he must treat the patient and not the case. At one stroke, Mr. Bevan tries to reverse the position. In truth, the Civil Service Army threatens to smother every remaining liberty!!"

DOCTORS IN FETTERS.

Mr. Anthony Weymouth writing under the title: "Doctors in Fetters" has a most admirable article in

the issue of the *Sunday Graphic* of March 24th. "Take next," he writes "the case of hospitals. All hospitals will become State institutions, and those working in them will be controlled by the rules and regulations laid down in Whitehall.

"You may wonder whether this matters, but should this Bill become law, you will soon note the difference between the voluntary hospital or the well-run municipal hospital, and the new State hospitals; which will be "owned" by Mr. Bevan and which are bound to lose all that sense of local patriotism which at present sustains and supports them.

"I will say little about the Ministry's plan to raid the hospitals of their possessions.

"It would be equally immoral to confiscate the properties owned by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, or to seize upon the funds of any charitable institution on which the Government casts a covetous eye."

HOSPITAL ORGANISATION.

A plan for a National Hospital Service has been prepared by the British Hospitals Association of which organisation Sir Bernard Docker is Chairman. This well-known public-spirited gentleman convened a consultation with the Press at which he did not hesitate to describe the policy of the Bill as "mass murder of the voluntary hospitals."

By these proposals, he said, the value and experience of the voluntary hospital service was deliberately destroyed. The scheme would lead to:

Loss of personal interest;

Destruction of local responsibility;

Upsetting the relationships now existing between management, doctors, staff and patients; and

Eradication of the real internal control of management.

This mass murder of the hospitals, their replacement by State institutions; this outrage on sentiment; this defiance of facts, as evidenced by the whole history of their achievement in medical progress, whether for prevention or cure, is wholly unnecessary.

By the hospitals' transfer to the State they would be liquidated, he said. The patient would be "caught and mangled" in the mechanism of the scheme.

For several months the officials of the Association had been unable to consult their constituent bodies on the proposals because they were "muzzled" by Mr. Bevan, Minister of Health.

The White Paper accompanying the Bill did not, as it should, contain a single reason, justification, or argument

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