

## Ireland.

### NATIONAL BABY WEEK FOR IRELAND.

At a meeting in connexion with National Baby Week, called by the Women's National Health Association on May 31st, in the Mansion House, Dublin, when the Lord Mayor was in the chair, Sir Andrew Horne, F.R.C.P., said that 16 per cent. of the infants born annually in Dublin, and in perfect health at the time of their birth, died before reaching the age of one year. Poverty, ignorance, and improper feeding were the three chief causes of the infantile mortality in Dublin. The great problem before the city of Dublin was the milk question. On one day he saw that there were no less than five or six prosecutions of milk vendors in Dublin. The prosecutions were not for impure milk, but for adulterated milk. No attention, apparently, was paid to impure milk. Lieutenant-Colonel William Taylor, President of the Royal College of Surgeons, moved the following resolution, which was passed unanimously:

That, as a Baby Week campaign is essential for the welfare of the nation, it is desirable to organize one in Dublin and throughout Ireland from July 1st to 7th, 1917, and that in connexion with it a representative baby health conference be held in Dublin, the Local Government Board being asked to approve of local authorities incurring the expense of sending delegates to such conference, providing that any local authority availing itself of the privilege has already a child welfare scheme in operation, or such a scheme in contemplation.

Dr. Mabel Crawford said that education was the main object of Baby Week. That improvement could be effected by making and enforcing efficient legislation had been proved in one town in America, where a reduction of the bacteria in milk by 80 per cent. had been followed by a fall of one-fourth in the deaths of infants from diarrhoeal diseases. It would take a long time to make the milk supply of Dublin satisfactory from the bacteriological point of view, and in the meantime milk dépôts should be set up in the city.

## Correspondence.

### THE CO-ORDINATION OF BRITISH MEDICAL POLICY.

SIR,—When the amateurs are ready again to enter upon the modification of medical practice, what are the defensive forces on which we shall rely, not only for our own protection, but the protection of the people of the empire, who are, when all is said and done, our medical charge? We may be sound in principle, wise in policy, but, if unsatisfactorily organized, we shall be beaten, as we were beaten over the Insurance Act.

There must obviously be some satisfactory corporate body capable of speaking and acting for the profession if it is to have a chance of success. Our choice seems to lie between:

The British Medical Association.

Certain (much smaller) associations or guilds.

Some (non-existent) great trade union.

Some (non-existent) alliance of colleges and universities.

The corporate body we want must be large and representative, and the time, I am sure, is short. Does any one really suppose we shall be able to grow *de novo* a great representative body in a few months? It has taken many years to make the British Medical Association what it is. It is plain nonsense to attempt such a construction, and we must use what we have. In other words, *we must rely on the British Medical Association.*

But the Association has recently failed us at our need, and I believe, as it stands, it will fail us again. And the question becomes the urgent one:

*How can we reconstitute it to give a better chance of success? We must get on. We have little time to waste. What have we learnt to guide us? We want economy, sound business management, the best brains the profession holds, the removal of the stigma of "trade unionism."*

What has the Association accomplished since the fatal days when it changed its constitution, wasted its big

reserve fund, began to waste its income, alienated many of its ablest members, and in place of posing as a great public-spirited association of professional men clad itself in the garb of the "war-strikers' parliament"? If we are to do any good we must undo all this. I am sorry if I hurt any of my friends by what I am saying. It has to be said by somebody. What we need are:

1. *A first-rate business secretary*—a business man (not a medical man whose profession this is not) carefully chosen for proved ability in management of important concerns and well paid—preferably a legal man.

2. *Cessation of financial waste*, in order as fast as possible to accumulate from our great income a considerable fighting fund. By this I mean cessation of payment of members for attendances at Representative Meetings and Council Meetings—we used to have excellent men when there was no payment—reduction of such committees as really need payment (owing to frequent and onerous business) to the smallest number really needed, reduction of unnecessary expense in printing and paper.

3. *Reduction to manageable numbers of the present Representative Meeting*—eighty members would be ample.

4. *Abolition of the principle of "delegation."* If medical men cannot be trusted honestly to "represent" constituencies we must indeed be in a bad way.

5. *Calling to our councils the best brains of the profession*, the eminent men who are interested in its welfare but who now stand aloof from what is virtually a trade union, and a bad failure at that.

Let us be quite clear about one thing. It is useless to try to govern or lead medicine by trade unionism, even if it were decent or moral to do so. We British doctors are not a group of self-seeking artisans. We hold in the hollow of our hand the health and happiness of the greatest of empires. No more tremendous responsibility in peace time devolves on any section of the community. To take as our model, in ordering our steps, the classes who have not enjoyed our advantages of education, tradition, and responsibility is, to my mind, as foolish as it is wrong. The basis of trade unionism is physical force. Can we do "peaceful picketing"? For such a calling as ours there can be only one final appeal—namely, to personal honour and an enlightened public conscience. Such should exist amongst us. In this war what record is more honourable than medicine's?

Nor does the Association exist by its trade unionism. It exists as it always has existed—because of its scientific and social functions. Take away its admirable JOURNAL and see how many members will remain. Its recent trade unionism is only a noxious parasite which has grafted itself on the real tree and is sapping its vitality. I would say, pluck it off, and let us once more have an association of cultivated men, respecting themselves and their art, fully alive to their responsibilities, desirous to carry into peace time the patriotism which has been patent to all the world in war, eager to improve their knowledge, not merely for their own advantage, but for that of humanity. The public will quickly enough recognize that fundamental change. The Association will then be able to speak—for the nation first, for itself afterwards. Against such an organization the intrigues of interested politicians will have far less chance of success. With such an Association, statesmen who honestly desire to solve the problems of the medical care of the country, on sound scientific lines, will find themselves immediately in sympathetic collaboration.—I am, etc.,

Exeter, June 3rd.

W. GORDON.

### THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE.

SIR,—Anything more remote from practical politics than the scheme of reconstruction of the Public Health Service adumbrated by the Council in the SUPPLEMENT to the JOURNAL of May 5th can hardly be conceived.

Take, for example, the constitution of the local authority for public health administration. "The local administrative health committee should consist of representatives (a) of the rating authorities, (b) of the education authorities, (c) of the persons contributing to a scheme of health insurance (including in this employers of labour), (d) the medical profession, (e) public hospitals, (f) dentists, (g) pharmacists, and (h) nurses." Does the Council for one moment imagine that the electorate will surrender