

policy and perfect the existing machinery of such a service in any given locality; for this at least is apparent, that the solution of the problem of maternal morbidity and mortality in the 'black areas' is not necessarily to be sought and may not be found in methods which may be applied successfully outside these areas, but will result from keen observation and an intelligent perception of economic, industrial, social, and any other factors which have a direct or potential bearing on the issue in its local interpretation."

It is with some satisfaction that I now detect a movement in official quarters towards such a service.—I am, etc.,

Bradford, May 25.

W. SUTHERLAND, M.D.

Good Milk and Fresh Vegetables

SIR,—It is a serious reflection on Great Britain that the death rate among Maltese children should be the highest in Europe. A high death rate of this sort is now recognized as due to defects of feeding, caused by an insufficiency of good milk and fresh vegetables. The milk of Malta is obtained from goats fed on imported foodstuffs because the soil on the island is not capable of producing an adequate supply of fresh green foodstuffs, either for animals or for human beings.

Children need good lime-containing milk from healthy animals fed on fresh green foodstuffs. Can these foodstuffs be produced on the island? If not, why not? Children themselves also need fresh vegetable foods containing vitamin B if they are to grow up strong and healthy. Without good milk and vegetables the children develop poor teeth and so cannot bite; indigestion sets in and vitality becomes lowered so as to allow of the development of respiratory and circulatory diseases. Feeble children, if they grow up, become men and women whose physical and mental capacity is of reduced national value.

In Great Britain the national committee set up to deal with food and nutrition has emphasized the importance of fresh green vegetable food, but without suggesting any special quantity. I have suggested 1 lb. per head weekly, which necessitates an annual production of 950,000 tons. At present we produce only 210,000—a deficiency of 740,000 tons annually. Sir John Orr, in a recent broadcast, suggested half a pound more than I did—namely, 1½ lb. per head weekly. In this case the national deficiency would be about 1,200,000 tons a year.

If my facts are of value there is something radically wrong with our food production. Farmers and gardeners are able to produce the needed amount, but the distribution is at fault. Does this mean that our only hope of national salvation depends on the setting up of a national method of distribution? The question has to be faced and thoroughly discussed, and medical men can make a valuable contribution both to the discussion and to the solution of the problem.—I am, etc.,

Swansea, May 31.

G. ARBOUR STEPHENS.

Air Raid Precautions

SIR,—The letter of Dr. Leys in your issue of May 22 (p. 1091) draws attention to a problem which is already confronting medical men. Are we to assist the Government in its endeavour to make the public air-raid conscious or are we not? My own mind is made up. I believe that all attempted precautions against bombing are futile, and I refuse to take part in them. Even did I believe them to be worth while there would still be the greater objection that air drill accustoms the public mind to the idea that war is inevitable, whereas I believe that

the time has come when organized mass murder should be unthinkable. Coué's favourite axiom that when the will and the imagination are in conflict the imagination always wins is a psychological truth. Whether the idea which occupies the mind is a hope or a fear makes no difference; there is an irresistible trend towards its realization, just as a man learning to ride a bicycle steers straight into an obstacle he is trying to avoid.

The historian of the future will be aghast at the complacency with which this generation accepts the idea that mass murder can be deliberately resorted to under any circumstances. The real tragedy of Guernica is that it is the logical outcome of the road which we ourselves have elected to travel: every country which possesses bombing aeroplanes must accept a share of the responsibility.

The arguments for or against pacifism are not to the point—which is that war with its pomp and pageantry and heroic virtues has gone for ever, and that its place has been taken by inhuman mechanical and chemical mass murder which can find no advocate in any sane man. Few people in a responsible position have a full realization of this. Most of them still talk of war in language appropriate to the Middle Ages. The martyrdom of Guernica will not have been in vain if through it the world can learn this lesson.—I am, etc.,

Birmingham, May 28.

R. MACDONALD LADELL.

Birching of Children

SIR,—In the present correspondence on judicial birching I consider one point has been largely overlooked. The punishment meted out to an offender is designed not only (or even mainly) to cure him of his evil proclivities, but also to act as a deterrent to others who might otherwise commit the offence. I submit that the fear of a birching does act as a deterrent.

I should be interested to know if Dr. W. N. Maple (May 22, p. 1093) concludes from the last paragraph of his letter that the English nation is more sadistic than most Continental nations.—I am, etc.,

Probus, Cornwall, May 22.

E. H. EASTCOTT.

SIR,—The idea that physical violence can never be justified in attempting to correct human behaviour, apart from self-defence, will undoubtedly grow, but only in proportion to the extent that the task of tracing the origin of the kinks which lead to anti-social behaviour is undertaken. The conviction that such means are justified is itself a mental kink, and is itself anti-social.

The proof lies within one's own mind; that is the difficulty, and many are unable to realize this. Complete recognition and realization of such mental kinks as normal primitive states, only abnormal when unsuppressed and unrealized in adult civilized man, as being part of our own nature are impossible for many alone and unaided. The proof of whether whipping cures the young of, let us say, stealing or lying at some particular time and in particular surroundings is beside the point; whipping, without doubt, does deter many; others it does not. But what else does it do? What other effects does it produce, immediate and remote? Very different conclusions can be drawn from homely psychological lessons by different observers.

In my opinion a knowledge of latent sadism cannot be acquired from a dictionary; this is unfortunate; nor can it be recognized, still less realized, from such perusal. It is innate in every human soul, and its grades are legion. No one likes to be told that a belief in physical violence as a proper corrective for what he believes to be childish