

## EDITOR'S SPECIAL DEPARTMENT.

### THE PROPOSED DOMINION HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

On March the 11th last, Dr. Roome, M.P., gave notice of the following resolution in the House of Commons: "That in the opinion of this House, the time has come when the Federal Government should establish a central Board of Health, with a responsible head, for the purpose of educating the people in health matters, preventing the spread of disease, and perfecting, as far as possible, the return of vital statistics."

The question of a Dominion Health Centre had been discussed considerably during the earlier part of the session, by most of the medical members of the House, but the session was nearly half over before Dr. Roome fully decided to move in the matter and bring the subject before the House. Then before the motion could come up for consideration, so many other motions having been previously on the list, the session was drawing near to a close, and although a number of the medical members had in a manner organized, laid out plans and were prepared to press fully the necessity of a Federal Health Organization upon the House, as any new measure brought in near the last of the session, when the desire of the members is strong to get through with the work and return home, rarely receives due attention from the members, it was at length wisely decided to give the proposed movement the best chance of being well received by the House, and accordingly it was put off till the beginning of next session, when it will doubtless be brought up early.

It is, we understand, the intention of medical members, on both sides of the House, to press for a Department of Health and to endeavor to have placed under its control all subjects which relate directly to the public health: such as a system of health statistics (including besides the mortuary returns, not from the entire Dominion but from a large number of centres—A system of reports on prevailing diseases, epidemics, &c.)—as a basis—the quarantines, adulteration of foods, diseases of domestic animals, the sanitary requirements of the dairy interests, &c. As indicated in Dr. Roome's resolution, the Department as proposed would be largely of an educational character, and would leave coercive measures, for the most part if not wholly, as at present, in the hands of the municipalities

and provinces. A Hygienic Laboratory for investigating into the causes and origin of disease would be an essential of such a Department. Indeed this is much needed in connection with the chief analysts branch of the Inland Revenue Department.

Although in Dr. Roome's motion, the words "Board of Health" are used, it is not, it appears, intended that the organization shall partake of the nature of a board, but that there shall be an Advisory Committee associated with the Department.

Never before, we believe, has there been such a feeling aroused among the medical members of Parliament as to the necessity for some central, responsible body to look after the health interests of the Dominion. Much good will doubtless eventually come as the result of this movement, and the public are to be congratulated upon Dr. Roome's action, and upon the fact too that there is apparently entire unanimity amongst the medical members of the House in relation to it. We believe Dr. Roome will be backed up by the strength of the profession in the Commons and later, by that of the Senate, which is far from inconsiderable; while we have no doubt that the profession throughout the Dominion will give all possible encouragement and aid to the good work.

THE LABOR COMMISSION has completed its work, it appears, and has no doubt laid a foundation for some useful future Legislation. It touched upon the health of working men, but only very briefly. It can hardly be that the Commissioners were fully familiar with the efforts being made in Great Britain for promoting the health of the masses of the people or they would have laid greater stress on this first essential of the working man—health—and given more consideration to the importance and means of promoting this "poor man's capital." Pure air being the first essential of health, it is of the first importance that every family be provided with such a dwelling place and surroundings as shall secure to the occupants of the dwelling pure air always, and in abundance. As an illustration of the value of such dwellings, we may point to a recent report relating to industrial dwellings in London, Eng. In 209 of such tenements, with a population of 1,021 souls, the death rate last year had been only 7.9 per