

The Royal Sanitary Commission (1869 to 1871) recommended that the administration of the public health and the relief of the poor should be in charge of a single Minister, and had expressed the opinion that if such a Ministry were established, *separate secretaries—one for public health and one for the relief of the poor*—would probably be found necessary. This suggestion, however, was *not* carried out, but all administration was concentrated in the hands of a single secretariate. The new office started then naturally as a continuance of the former Poor Law Office, which had never controlled sanitary matters, but had only medical responsibility for the sick poor. The Royal Commissioners had expressed or implied that the new authority should be a “motive power” of no mean degree for promoting sanitary progress, besides the continuance and extension of merely sanctioning powers for different purposes of local sanitary government. It was to have a legislative as well as an administrative side. The legislative policy implied was in the direction of amendment of existing enactments; the administrative policy was in the first place to organize a thoroughly efficient system of supervision and observation in every district of jurisdiction of the country, by which information and guidance in action or pressure might be applied.

It is impossible to avoid, at this point, the comparison of such a stimulating plan of action with the policy of the Board in 1888, when it desired to transfer to County Councils *all the powers* which it now has under the Public Health Act of enforcing on defaulting district authorities the performance of their sanitary duties. Truly a premature effort at decentralization!

To resume: The Board is invested (1) with the powers and duties of the Poor Law Board; (2) with all the powers and duties of the Privy Council relating to vaccination and the prevention of disease; (3) all the powers and duties of the Home Office in relation to public health, drainage and sanitary measures, baths and wash-houses, public and town improvements, artisans' and laborers' dwellings, local government, local returns and local taxation. The growth of its duties is steady and continuous. It has legislative powers of making rules, regulations and orders, and of confirming by-laws. Its administrative control varies considerably; over poor law matters it is complete; over municipalities the Board has no direct control. Over sanitary authorities that Board has considerable powers; it can force them to carry out sanitary measures to its satisfaction. All the powers conferred on the Privy Council by the Diseases Preven-