

Memorandum to Cabinet by theHon. Minister of Labour, Employment and Welfare.Introduction of a Health Insurance System

Our social legislation is quite comprehensive including as it does the National Insurance Act covering several contingencies such as Sickness, Unemployment, Injury, Old Age etc., the National Assistance Act providing means of subsistence in unemployment and sickness, as also free hospitalisation to the indigent, and the Old Age Pensions Act providing relief to old persons and to blind persons. An extensive district medical service constitutes another welfare service provided by the State.

One aspect of social benefit which is still lacking in these Islands is a health insurance system which would provide a free medical service to all the population. The introduction of a system which would not impinge on the liberty of the individual to choose the medical practitioner he wants but at the same time exonerate him from having to pay for the doctor's visit and treatment would be popular with the public and with the medical officers themselves.

No doubt such a measure presents various technical and financial difficulties and expert advice has to be sought before Government can embark on a major project of this sort.

Hon. Ministers are invited to agree to the proposal in principle. If such agreement is forthcoming steps should be taken to obtain the services of an expert in the line of health insurance who would be required to study the project in consultation with the Ministries concerned, make definite proposals which would again be studied by Government, and then draft the necessary legislation.

19th September, 1967.