

Sheppard-Towner Bill

By LOIS MILLER HERD

THE Sheppard-Towner Bill is known officially as "an act for the promotion of the welfare and hygiene of maternity and infancy for other purposes".

This act came as a result of a great number of studies made on the high rate of mother and infant mortality in the United States. In making this investigation it was found that, of the countries of the world, the United States was the most dangerous place for a baby to be born in. More women die from child-birth in the United States than from any other cause with the exception of tuberculosis.

The lowest mortality rate in the world is in Italy with two mothers dying to every one thousand births. Germany and Japan have a mortality rate of seven mothers for every two thousand births. England, a mortality rate of eight mothers for every two thousand births; France, nine mothers for every two thousand births, with America having a record of thirteen deaths for every two thousand births.

Few of us realize the number of babies who die before the age of one year. In 1920, 1,500,000 babies were born in the United States and 300,000 of this number did not live to the age of one year. What can be the cause of these staggering figures?

Among the various reasons found for such a large death-rate among the newborn babies, the most apparent are poor housing conditions; the large amount of work done by mothers before or after the birth of the child; and improper diets. Good parental and infant care have been shown to reduce infant mortality to a great extent. These facts bring out clearly that the lack of facilities and of instruction or proper knowledge as to the care before and after the birth of the child are the main causes for this large death rate.

We all sincerely believe in the education of our children—do we not? Is it not just as important that they live to the educational age and that every safeguard be taken in their prenatal life and early years so that they will reach that period of life when their education begins?

The first public recognition of the great need of mothers and babies in this country was brought out by the Federal Chil-

dren's Bureau under the leadership of Miss Julia Lathrop.

Finally in the 65th Congress a bill for federal aid was introduced by Jeanette Rankin. It was favorably reported out of committee, but did not pass. It was introduced again in the 66th Congress by Senator Sheppard of Texas and Representative Towner of Iowa. Passing the Senate, it was favorably reported on, but not voted on. Finally, however, on April 21st, in the 67th Congress, it was again introduced and passed both Houses in November, 1921.

The difficulties besetting this act were many and annoying. It had to find its way along an unbroken path, for no legislation of its kind had ever before been passed.

During the presentation of the Sheppard-Towner Bill before the Senate, Senator Sheppard made a wonderful speech, a part of which seems worthy of quoting.

"Mr. President: If this nation declines to take the necessary steps to end the appalling waste of lives of mothers and children in America, a destruction exceeding every year our total casualties in the most stupendous and terrible war of history, it will invite severest censure. The mother who faces death in child-birth is as much a soldier as the uniformed hero on the field of arms. The World War has ended, but not her battles or her martyrdoms. Thru all the centuries that are yet to come, whenever a human life is to be ushered into existence, she must go down into the valley of another Marne, the shadow of another Somme. For her, and for the life that flowers from her blood and tears, it is a compelling duty to provide every possible safeguard, every possible protection."

After this speech one of Senator Sheppard's opponents sent a note to Senator Sheppard, which read, "You have made a wonderful speech and your bill will pass."

The Sheppard-Towner Bill provides that the United States government give every state, regardless of population, \$10,000 to start a system of maternity and infant care and shall thereafter give each state, in proportion to its population, a part of a \$1,000,000 appropriation, providing each state raises an equal amount. A committee, made up of the National

Secretary of Agriculture, Surgeon-General of the United States Public Health Service, United States Commissioner of Education, and the Chief of the Children's Bureau and Department of Labor, is required to pass on all plans made by the states. Those states whose plans are approved are paid the stated amount with the requirement that it shall be spent under the authority of the State Division of Child Hygiene.

At the Senate hearing of the Sheppard-Towner Bill, medical experts testified that, with ordinary nursing care and the services of a nurse to instruct mothers during pregnancy, the death rate during the first month of infant life can be cut one-half to two-thirds. Among babies of mothers receiving intelligent care, the death rate did not exceed 18-19% as contrasted with 40% among those not receiving care.

The cost of saving these lives has been estimated as less than one-twentieth the cost of a single modern battleship. Which is the most important to us?

The Sheppard-Towner Bill will bring to women the kind of education they have a perfect right to demand in order that their lives and their children's lives may be saved. It is, therefore, the duty of every mother to find out what part her community is playing in making the United States a safer place to live in. If she should find conditions bad, it should be an incentive to her to raise the local standards to the highest possible plane. Mothers will see that the measures of the bill are carried out effectively and take advantage of the information offered.

With the sum of \$10,000 as a starter and an equal amount by the states the existing maternity hospitals in remote places now neglected may be expanded, and make it possible that nurses can be obtained during pregnancy and doctor's cars may be had at childbirth no matter what the financial circumstances of the women are. Hospital facilities, not only in the city, but in the country also, can be extended so that no mother will face danger or injury through the lack of proper care before, during, or after childbirth.

When this act has gone into effect, any community has the right to demand that its state department give it these services.

Buttons and _____ Buttons

By ESTHER ELLEN RAYBURN

MEN are fond of buttons. Indeed it was they who first stepped forth arrayed in many buttons. The Red Coats and the Hessians, Napoleon and Washington all paraded a goodly number of them on their dress uniforms. In all good family chests you are sure to find a stray brass button which may have dropped from the uniform of grandmother's one-time sweetheart. History tells us these things and we must believe history even if, because

of the conventional few seen on the clothes of modern man, we are inclined to believe it must have been the women who started the fashion.

Perhaps the first feminine creature who wore buttons upon her dress was considered manish and bold, poor thing! It was she who wore the tiny brass and steel buttons in stately rows, military style, upon her gown. In these late years the steel button is much in evi-

dence. The gayest and jingliest of dresses is the one which is trimmed with steel dime-shaped buttons which are arranged in pyramid fashion on the skirt with a single row around the neck and sleeves. Of course the little brass ones have their own ways of making a dress attractive just as the others do.

For years the pearl button reigned supreme. They were everywhere, and of (Continued on page 19)