

**Deputation to the Right Hon. Augustine Birrell, regarding medical inspection and teaching of hygiene in schools / National League for Physical Education and Improvement.**

**Contributors**

National League for Physical Education and Improvement.  
Brunton, Thomas Lauder, Sir, 1844-1916.  
Royal College of Surgeons of England

**Publication/Creation**

[London] : Harrison and Sons, printers, [1906]

**Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/n8fhjhm4>

**Provider**

Royal College of Surgeons

**License and attribution**

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by The Royal College of Surgeons of England. The original may be consulted at The Royal College of Surgeons of England. where the originals may be consulted. Conditions of use: it is possible this item is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s).



Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>



NATIONAL LEAGUE  
TION A

DEPUTATION TO THE  
REGARDING MEDICAL  
HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS

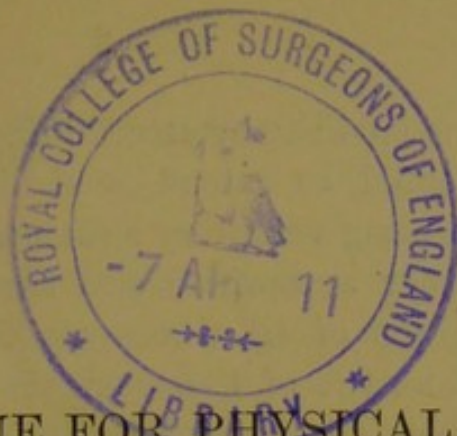
Mr. Eirell, President  
private in his room at  
1904, a deputation from  
Education and Improvement  
Henry Crick, M.P., into  
the Bishop of Ripon,  
Beverly, Professor F.  
Davenport, Mrs. Schacht

In the course of  
speech as follows:—

Sir,—We thank you  
deputation from the  
and Improvement. I  
Second International  
as in the meantime  
English Government  
influence not only our

If you will allow  
of what the League  
many people think, in  
work of any society  
physical welfare of the  
will put it, to bear  
cleaning house does to  
together, and to end  
(15644)





16.

## NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND IMPROVEMENT.

DEPUTATION TO THE RIGHT HON. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL,  
REGARDING MEDICAL INSPECTION AND TEACHING OF  
HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS.

Mr. Birrell, President of the Board of Education, received in private in his room at the House of Commons, February 27th 1906, a deputation from the National League for Physical Education and Improvement. Mr. Compton Rickett, M.P., and Sir Henry Craik, M.P., introduced the deputation, which included the Bishop of Ripon, the Bishop of Southwark, Sir Lauder Brunton, Professor H. Marsh, of Cambridge, Miss Alice Ravenhill, Mrs. Scharlieb, M.D., and the Secretary.

In the course of their interview Sir Lauder Brunton spoke as follows :—

SIR,—We thank you for your courtesy in receiving us as a deputation from the National League for Physical Education and Improvement. I may also thank you in the name of the Second International Congress for School Hygiene, of which I am in the meantime President, for the action taken by the English Government in regard to school hygiene will greatly influence not only our Colonies but foreign countries.

If you will allow me I will begin by giving a short account of what the League is not, and of what it is. It is not, as many people think, intended to displace or interfere with the work of any society or individual at present working for the physical welfare of the people, but it is intended, as some one well put it, to bear the same relationship to them that a clearing house does to a bank. It is intended to combine them together, and to enable them to co-operate by making them



known to one another, by ascertaining how their work can best be supplemented, to extend it to districts where it does not exist, and to bring voluntary agencies into relation with municipal and other authorities and the Legislature so that the combined action of all three may effect for the good of the country what none of them can do alone. The scope of the League is therefore very wide. It hopes by a combination of these agencies to lessen infant mortality, to breed up a healthier race of children, to instruct parents, to improve the housing of the people, and to remove the acknowledged evils the existence of which was admitted by the Physical Deterioration Committee. We have come to you to-day, Sir, not to bring before you anything new, but to urge that the admirable recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Physical Training for Scotland, by the Physical Deterioration Committee, and several Interdepartmental Committees shall be carried into effect. The Physical Deterioration Committee were unable from want of data to say that actual deterioration exists, but there is certainly a great deal of physical inefficiency, especially amongst the poorer classes of this country. The richer classes, on the contrary, with abundant food and more physical exercise than was formerly in vogue, have apparently increased in stature and strength, and this is more especially marked amongst girls. What we desire is that the children of the poor should have the same chances in life as those of the rich, by having their bodies improved by feeding where necessary and by physical training, so that they may be able to utilise, in the struggle for existence, the mental training which the State has already decided to be necessary for every child throughout the country. The basis upon which all physical training must be founded, is acknowledged in all the Bluebooks issued on the subject to be medical inspection. I have therefore to bring before you this resolution that the Council of the National League for Physical Education and Improvement are strongly of opinion that the medical inspection of children in all schools and colleges should be compulsory and under the control of the Central Authority. Efficient medical inspection of schools at present exists in comparatively few places. There



is at present a doubt whether a medical officer can inspect a child, unless by the express permission of the parents, without rendering himself liable to an action for assault. We trust that the present opportunity afforded by a new Education Bill will be utilised so that medical inspection shall be universal, and that the training, both mental and physical, to be given in the schools may be beneficial and not harmful to the child. The State has already recognised the necessity for classifying children according to their mental powers, and separating the feeble-minded, who are subjected to a different system of training from the others. But it is also desirable that those who are defective in sight, hearing, or body generally should also be classified and the training adapted to their needs. This can only be done by medical inspection. Every school earning a grant should be required to return, in Form 9, the name of a school medical officer as well as the name of an official correspondent as a condition of the grant, and this officer should not be dismissed without the sanction of the Board. In order to ensure a certain amount of uniformity of medical supervision throughout the country there ought to be medical inspectors appointed by the Board of Education, and as technical questions are sure to arise in connection with the subject, the Board should have a Central Advisory Committee of medical men to deal with them. The necessity for universal medical inspection of school children is the fundamental proposition which we wish to bring forward, because without it other reforms can only be imperfectly carried out. But we do not wish this opportunity of other reforms to be neglected.

The necessity for physical training as a part of education has been already acknowledged by the Board of Education, and the Bluebook on a Model Course gives directions as to how this training should be effected. If such training is universal, however, there will be a large demand for trained teachers, a demand which the present Training Institutes for Physical Culture throughout the country will probably be unable to meet. Here the National League hopes to be of assistance, and a Committee of this League is now considering the formation of a Central Institute for physical training which may not



only supply the necessary number of teachers, but create uniformity throughout the country by a system of examination and certificate, but here co-operation between the League and the Board of Education is necessary, for the Royal Commission on Physical Training consider that certificates of efficiency should be granted under the authority of the Education Department. But the Royal Scottish Commission regard games as equally important with physical drill for the development of a healthy body, and even more important for the development of a healthy mind. In Switzerland games are regarded as a part of physical training, are inspected by teachers, who see that horseplay is avoided, and that the weaker, who are most in want of physical training, shall not be driven to the wall by the stronger. But games require playgrounds, and it is essential that provision should be made by local authorities for sufficient playgrounds, as well as for covered sheds or other places where exercise may be taken in bad weather. We think that the action already taken by the Education Committee of the London County Council in opening playgrounds after school hours, provided proper supervision can be assured, might with advantage be extended throughout the country, and we would welcome any legislation which would lead to this. We recognise the difficulty of such inspection as involving greater expense to the ratepayers, and we believe that by the co-ordination of voluntary effort which the League hopes to ensure, this difficulty will be overcome. We wish to draw special attention to Rec. 47 of the Physical Deterioration Committee to the effect "that lads should be made to attend evening continuation classes in which drill and physical exercises should take a prominent place," exemption being granted to enrolled and efficient members of such clubs and cadet corps which have been submitted to inspection, and conform to the regulations qualifying them for public aid. Encouragement of such clubs, which the Committee here recognise, is so closely connected with physical education that the power to aid them by grants from the Treasury might perhaps properly form a part of an Education Bill. One of the great objects of the National League is to fulfil the wish



expressed by the Physical Deterioration Committee in the Report, Rec. 48, page 92, that:—

“In order to organise existing efforts on a comprehensive and effective basis, the Committee would like to see a central body, in touch with municipal activity, established in every large town, and charged with the duty of supervising and directing voluntary agencies with a view to bringing them up to a minimum standard of efficiency.”

The feeding of children is a matter of essential importance, for to increase the work, either mental or bodily, to be done by a starved child is cruelty instead of kindness. The League thinks that provision should be made for the feeding of children, but at the same time it is very anxious not to increase the burden of the ratepayers or to lessen the sense of parental responsibility. It hopes here by the co-ordination of voluntary agencies to render essential service to the Board of Education. (Report, paras. 85 and 86, p. 19.) The training of girls in cooking is of the utmost importance and a system of feeding in schools might afford opportunities for girls not only to learn how to cook, but to taste what they have cooked. They should also learn how to buy food and how they could get the most nutritious and agreeable food at the least possible expense.

Before concluding I would again refer to the enormous sacrifice of infant life which so impressed the Committee on Physical Deterioration. (Report, Rec. 29, p. 89.) The real remedy according to them lies greatly in the hands of the Education Department, for they say it “Is to be sought in that social education by means of which at first in the school and afterwards ‘elsewhere’ the foundations of maternal competence may be laid.” (Report, para. 277.) We therefore urge that the teaching of hygiene in schools should be recognised as equally important with that of the three R’s, and if necessary, room may be made for it by the omission of other subjects from the school curriculum, and it should count with other subjects as a subject entitling teachers to a grant. Full information in regard to details of how the reforms that we desire may be carried out is to be found in the various bluebooks and the League will only be too glad to give you from them or from



independent sources any information that you may desire in regard to details.

If compulsory powers for the above subjects should prove at present to be inadmissible, we humbly suggest that permissive powers may be obtained which would enable each representative body to adopt compulsion or not as it pleases, together with a small rating addition necessary to make them effective.

We would humbly suggest also that the legislative power at present sought should be in advance of that which is for the time being administratively desirable, so that advance should not in the future be retarded by its absence.

Again, Sir, we thank you for your courtesy in receiving us to-day.







