

MAY RECOMMEND NEW DEPARTMENT

President Taft Said to be Considering Creation of Another Cabinet Office.

CONCERN PUBLIC HEALTH.

Enforcement of Existing Law on Subject Serves to Embarrass Several of Present Departments.

(Special Correspondence)
Washington, D. C., Nov. 22.—In his annual message to Congress it is expected that President Taft will recommend the establishment of a new bureau or department of public health. If a sufficient showing is made he will recommend the creation of a "department" the head of which will be a cabinet officer. Otherwise he will probably content himself with recommending a "bureau" under one of the departments now existing. There are already nine departments with cabinet officers and a prejudice exists in Congress against increasing that number. A department is created in the field of usefulness, and independent of number of employees, the expense of conducting it seems to increase by leaps and bounds. On the other hand, those interested in the question appertaining to public health insist that nothing short of an independent department will serve to protect the health of the nation in an adequate manner, that such work must be carried on independently and without reference to interests of wealth production or wealth accumulation. What view President Taft will take is yet unsettled, but in giving the matter his close and personal attention, Surgeon-General Walter Wyman, of the marine hospital service, has submitted a report on the subject which he spent months in preparing. Dr. Charles A. Reed, Cincinnati, chairman of the medical committee representing the American Medical Association, has prepared his views at the request of the president and will, it is understood, shortly present them in person. The American Medical Association is one of the numerous organizations which would prefer a department to a bureau.

DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED.
A number of departments are concerned in the matter. The department of commerce and labor has always felt that questions affecting the manufacture of foods should come within its jurisdiction. The treasury department has already a skeleton bureau known as the "Bureau of public health and marine hospital services," of which Dr. Wyman is the head. The department of agriculture, now charged with the enforcement of the pure food and meat inspection acts, with the bureau of animal industry, is vitally interested.

A new bureau or department would take over all existing bureaus or divisions relating to the public health and would deprive the department of agriculture of considerable of its power and prestige. For this reason Secy. Wilson is put down as opposing any change in the situation. It has been suggested, however, that the enforcement of an act regulating drugs and manufactured foods, should have been left to some department better equipped for the purpose and whose existing work was more allied to the subject. This is the department of agriculture which is concerned with matters relating to the farm and whose scientists are trained in that direction. Doubtless another department would have been charged with the duty of enforcing the pure food and drug act, had it not been for the prestige and influence of Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, the chemist of the department of agriculture, who had fought so long and hard for pure food and drugs, and who naturally sought to be placed in supreme command of the forces appying the act. Dr. Wiley has been compelled, however, to sit by and play second fiddle, and it is presumed that he would welcome a situation that would lead to the separation of himself and Secy. Wilson and the latter's association with him.

That Secy. Wilson is conscientious in his efforts to see the pure food law is properly enforced, is not doubted by any one familiar with his history and personally acquainted with the man. At the same time a conflict of personal ambitions, and a desire for differences of opinion, larger than once been manifested in the department, which has not resulted in any change to say the least. Secretary Wilson is more than 74 years of age; he holds the record for service in the cabinet, and it is doubtful if he will serve through the Taft administration. His retirement, however, would not be peace to the department as far as the pure food and drug act is concerned, and there is apparently no satisfactory solution to the problem except the creation of a new department or bureau and the transfer to it of the work now being done by the department of agriculture.

MISTAKE WAS MADE.

That the overturning of Wiley on the benzene of soda decision was a mistake is being evidenced more and more. All the fight made by the friends of the preservative has been based on the alleged harmlessness of one-tenth of 1 per cent of one ounce of benzene of soda to a thousand ounces of food. But the users of benzene of soda can not always regulate the amount, even if they so desire. For example, the department has just issued a bulletin telling of the sediment of 20 per cent and 50 per cent tin of ketone made by a certain manufacturing firm and labeled as containing one-tenth of 1 per cent benzene of soda, which was found to contain 200 per cent, or more than 20 times the amount stated on the label, being at the rate of 20% ounces to the thousand. The court sustained the seizure, the manufacturers making no defense.

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