

Old Age Pensions. Most old people in workhouses were too feeble to leave, and it was proposed to transfer these to homes for the aged with a nurse and doctor in attendance under the Health Authority. The abolition of the pauper disqualification would enable 200,000 more people to obtain Old Age Pensions, and they were rather apt to come to the conclusion that the abolition of this disqualification would affect most of the old people now in workhouses, but there would still be a very large number under the qualifying age and therefore not eligible. Many of the old people in the workhouse had no relatives able to keep them on five shillings a week. Pensions should be raised at the earliest possible moment to seven and sixpence per week, and she would be quite prepared to advocate ten shillings per week. The age limit should be lowered to sixty. This was not at all an extravagant demand, as plenty of people at sixty years of age were unable to earn their own living. They had worked hard for perhaps fifty years, and surely by that time they had earned pensions. Pensions should also be granted to all persons permanently incapacitated at any age.

#### **THE ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY.**

Some of the critics seemed to be in doubt as to whether it was wise to place power in the hands of so-called new authorities, but these so-called new authorities were not new authorities at all. In most cases the authority would be the Town Council or County Council, directly elected democratic bodies. It had been objected that under the new proposals power would be placed in the hands of officials or indirectly elected bodies, which would be a most mischievous thing, but it was not proposed to do this. The local Health Authority was the popularly elected Town Council. The Town Council need not give independent powers to its committee. All popularly elected bodies must work through committees, as Boards of Guardians did to-day. The Town Council had no different machinery to that, but she quite agreed that every care must be taken to give power only to the directly elected representatives of the people. Some people imagined that the County Council would do everything, but every little town and district had its own Health Authority. As the sick could be looked after by the local Health Authority so could the children and necessitous mothers be looked after by the respective authorities. If they agreed that all this should be done without any taint of pauperism they would see that there was no need at all for any Poor Law Authority. The objection had been made to all these proposals that after all it was only patching up. It was very easy to say that what was wrong with the poor was their poverty, but the problem of poverty was not simple; it was complex and many sided.