

THE MIDWIVES' BILL
COMMITTEE.BRITISH MEDICAL
ASSOCIATION.

Includes lying-in homes among the matters over which the Board have control, gives power of deputing inquiries to Committees, with power to act, and makes it misconduct to omit to send for medical practitioner when case not natural labour. Provides for cost of local supervision.

Local supervising authority to be the County M.O.H. or other practitioner or practitioners.

Local supervising authority to be a county committee of not fewer than three registered medical practitioners not teachers or examiners of midwives.

Gives local authority power to suspend from practice pending inquiry by Board.

We have previously declared ourselves uncompromisingly opposed to annual licences for midwives, but we think the definition of the word midwife of the British Medical Association is preferable to that of the Midwives Bill Committee. We entirely approve of the clause debarring a midwife from employing an unlicensed substitute. This should strike at the root of the indefensible system, which obtains in too many lying-in institutions, of sending out uncertificated pupils to gain their experience by attending lying-in women. With regard to still-birth, if the midwife present at the birth of a still-born child is not to give a certificate, manifestly no one else can, unless an inquest, and a post mortem, are held in every case. This would put the country to very considerable expense, and we consider that the necessities of the case would be met if still-births were registered, which is not at present the case. It should, undoubtedly, be compulsory that every still-birth should be notified to the Registrar, or the Coroner, and this would check abuses which are liable to occur under present conditions. We think that the provision which makes the Board the sole judge of what certificate shall entitle to licence a reasonable one. We fully appreciate the good work which has been done by the London Obstetrical Society in establishing a central examination, and in raising the standard of the training schools; but at the same time we do not think that any Board would care to commit itself to accept in every case the certificate of one particular body.

CRITICISM BY THE MIDWIVES' INSTITUTE.

The Incorporated Midwives' Institute has forwarded to the Midwives' Bill Committee the following criticisms: "The Council of the Incorporated Midwives' Institute consider this Bill inferior to that of last year, but they are, however, so strongly impressed with the urgent need for legislation that they will offer no opposition to the present Bill so long as the following points are insisted on:

"1. That the final decision in all cases be in the hands of the central authority (see Clause 9, Duties of Supervising Authority, and Clause 10, Annual and Local Certificate). They consider with regard to Clause 10 that their interests are not sufficiently safeguarded.

"2. That their representation on the Central Board is retained, and that an amendment is asked for. 'That the nominees of the Privy Council should be two lay persons, one a woman.'

"3. That the certificate of the London Obstetrical Society be retained as a qualification for licence.

"Your Committee will doubtless consider that those three points are some of them dealt with in the Bill, and that the others will follow as a natural sequence. The reason the Council of the Institute have called your attention to them is because of the amendments to this Bill that have appeared in the 'British Medical Journal,' and which will doubtless be largely supported by the medical profession. The Council of the Incorporated Midwives' Institute consider the machinery of the new clauses to be so complicated that they will prove unworkable and provide only a 'nominal' protection to the mother, and the 'pretence' of a monopoly of practice to the licensed midwife. They consider the unconscientious midwife will have every opportunity of evading the law, while the conscientious midwife is controlled at every turn, and might possibly fall a victim to local jealousy, owing to the preponderance of medical representation on the Midwives' Board. A further danger is created by the uncertainty regarding the official position of the person to be appointed as local supervising authority."

RESOLUTION BY THE MIDWIVES' SOCIETY,
MANCHESTER.

With the exception of a meeting in Manchester we have heard of none in the Provinces to consider the Midwives' Bill, but the Midwives' Society, Manchester, which previously declared against the present Midwives' Bill met recently to consider the following resolution: "That as the practice of medicine and surgery together with the practice of midwifery as is customary by a very large proportion of the members of the medical profession, and by many district nurses, is provocative of grave danger and death to lying-in

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