

National Insurance and the Maternity Hospitals.

Dr. Elizabeth Sloan Chesser, writing in the press on the National Insurance Scheme, says that unless it is very carefully applied it will cripple enormously the maternity institutions, of which there are about forty in the United Kingdom. In most of these hospitals no charge is made, as they are intended for the relief of the very poorest women in their hour of need. The scheme as it stands at present will handicap the hospitals, first, by taking away a large number of their patients, and as these hospitals are important teaching centres for medical students and training institutions for nurses and midwives, this will be a serious matter. It will react upon the people also because the 30s. maternity benefit cannot possibly compare with the worth of two weeks in hospital to a woman at such a time, where she receives skilled care under the most hygienic conditions. Then what of the cases of premature birth or miscarriage? Is the insured woman worker paid 7s. 6d. a week or 30s. benefit without the restriction of four week's absence? Is the house mother given a maternity allowance in such an instance, or when a child is stillborn? The Bill is vague, necessarily vague, on all these points, but difficulties are bound to arise.

The Midwives' Institute.

The Midwives' Institute has just issued a pamphlet entitled "The Midwives' Institute, Past and Present," giving an account of its foundation and work. It is well to recall history, and to remind midwives of the present day that it was founded in 1881 by Miss Louisa Hubbard and Mrs. Henry Smith, its chief object being to raise the efficiency and improve the status, of midwives. With this object in view it became incorporated by the Board of Trade in 1889, and in 1890 promoted the first Bill introduced into Parliament for the Registration of Midwives. This Bill, introduced by Mr. Fell Pease, M.P., was referred to a Select Committee, but blocked on its third reading, and eight further Bills were introduced before the passing of the Midwives' Act in 1902. A Guarantee Fund of £1,000 was raised by the Institute to defray the expenses of the campaign.

It is, we are told, owing to the efforts of the early members of the Midwives' Institute that the word "midwife" was retained as a distinctive title instead of "midwifery nurse" or "obstetric nurse." We can only say that we wish the midwives would be proud of their distinctive title now they have won it, and not constantly use that of nurse, and that the public press would also appreciate the difference.

It was a just recognition of the work of the Institute in securing the passing of the Act that Miss J. Wilson, the President, Miss Paget, the Treasurer, and Miss Oldham, a Vice-President, were nominated members of the Central Midwives' Board when constituted.

When a Departmental Committee was appointed to enquire into the working of the Midwives' Act,

Miss Wilson, who sat on the Central Midwives' Board as the nominee of the Privy Council, felt it her duty to resign her seat as a public protest against the omission to include any midwife as a member of that Committee, as the Lord President refused to make any alteration in its constitution.

When the Amending Bill, based in part on the Report of that Committee, was introduced into Parliament as a Government measure, the urgent need for combined action on the part of midwives was apparent. We cannot subscribe to the statement that it was only when the Amending Bill was introduced that this need began to be realised, for the trouble in regard to obtaining an improvement in the conditions under which midwives practise has always been their unorganised condition. But the Midwives' Institute, in view of the fact that the Amending Midwives' Bill, if passed, would put greater difficulties in the way of the practising midwives, is endeavouring to secure the co-operation of all midwives, and invites existing societies to affiliate with it with the object of influencing Parliament "in the right direction."

This policy is to be commended. But it must be remembered that the policy, which has always seemed right to the Midwives' Institute, has been that the certified midwives should be represented in part on their Governing Body by a medical practitioner, that the Amending Bills introduced both by Lord Wolverhampton and his successor as Lord President of the Council, Earl Beauchamp, provided for the appointment of *two* certified midwives on their Governing Body, and that the Bill amended in Committee, and on report, only secures a seat to *one* certified midwife, as the representative of the Royal British Nurses' Association, who was at first to be a certified midwife, is now to be a "person," and of the "two persons" to be nominated by the Incorporated Midwives' Institute—the Institute having secured a second representative—only one is to be a midwife.

The Midwives' Institute has, of course, every right to formulate its own policy, but to claim that midwives should be represented by medical or lay representatives is to alienate the co-operation of those who hold strongly that midwives should be represented only by members of their own calling.

CORONATION BABIES.

Five children (three girls and two boys) were born in Queen Charlotte's Hospital on Coronation Day. The girls have all been named Mary, and the boys George.

CHARGE AGAINST A CERTIFIED MIDWIFE.

Mrs. Annie Marion Sadler, of Westmoreland Street, Pimlico, has been committed for trial on a charge of performing an illegal operation upon Dorothy O'Connell, a chorus girl. She also awaits trial on a similar charge in connection with a young woman whose theatre name is Young.

ABNORMALLY LONG RETENTION OF THE PLACENTA.

The *New York Medical Journal* states that Huetffel reports a case in which the placenta was removed after it had been retained at least eight weeks. It had caused very little trouble, and its removal excited no inflammation.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)