

The Midwife.

A NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INFANT WELFARE.

The opening of this three days' Conference, held as part of the National Baby Week Celebrations, took place on Tuesday, July 1st, at the Kingsway Hall, Kingsway, London. The Rt. Hon. Christopher Addison, M.P., first Minister of Public Health, gave an inaugural address.

It was singularly fitting, he said, that on the day when the transference of powers to the Ministry of Health took place, the first duty of the Minister should be to preside at a meeting dealing with infant care. He further said, that if we are to build up our people in health, we must begin at the cradle or before. Reduction of infant mortality means not only saving of life, but increase of health both of mother and children who survive. One of the first duties must be to develop and extend the service of assistance connected with ante-natal and infant care. Dr. Addison has appointed Dr. Janet Campbell in charge of a department for maternity and child welfare. We have got past the stage of divided responsibility and many departments, in favour of a real constructive policy. The two most important things are common sense and human sympathy. The mothers must have places to go to which they like, and which really appeal to them.

There is to be no cut-and-dried scheme. There is need for provision of more maternity homes and hospitals, both for normal cases and difficult confinements. We must have, Dr. Addison said, the co-operation and confidence of midwives throughout the country. There is great need for improvement in housing conditions, but the most important thing of all, is the spread of knowledge amongst the general public. We have still much to learn; we have had, at present, no adequate survey of our needs. There must be a more generous provision of maternity hospitals. The Minister also urged that there must be an improvement in the training of midwives, and better provision for their comfort, and better pay. We are certain, he remarked, to secure the hearty co-operation of the medical profession. The greatest need of all, however, is the spread among our people of *common knowledge*. We cannot reasonably expect healthy and happy children, if the conditions under which they are brought up are wholly inadequate, as is often the case. There must, therefore, be much better provision for the comfort and convenience of the mother; such as greater facilities for cooking, washing, &c., &c. Improved housing, therefore, is an essential part of the scheme of reconstruction.

The speaker again urged that the spread of knowledge among women and girls was of supreme importance. One thing we must carefully avoid, namely, undue interference with family affairs. Having just signed the Peace Treaty, we were now turning our thoughts to the affairs of peace, and nothing will induce to that end more than to work for the improvement of such things as housing, education, fresh air, midwives, infant welfare, town-planning, &c. Great opportunities lie before us, and no pains will be spared, and no efforts will be wanting to achieve our purpose. Before Dr. Addison left the Hall, Dr. Still, F.R.C.P., from the chair, proposed a vote of thanks for his kindness in coming to give such an inspiring address.

Then followed the reading of three excellent and educative papers. Dr. Amand Routh, F.R.C.P., Consulting Obstetric Physician, Charing Cross Hospital, addressed the meeting upon the "Causes of Ante-Natal, Natal, and Neo-Natal Mortality." Time and space will not admit of details of this valuable paper; suffice it to say that the alarming statistics which he gave are facts which, in themselves, amply justify the establishment of a Ministry of Health. Dr. Eardley Holland, F.R.C.S., followed with a paper on "The Results to be Expected from Ante-Natal Care." The subject of Dr. J. J. Buchan's paper (M.O.H., Bradford) was "Ante-Natal and Neo-Natal Mortality." A lively and interesting discussion followed, opened by Lady Barrett. Dr. Lambie, from Lanarkshire, evoked great enthusiasm by his vehement insistence upon the importance of the prevention of venereal diseases. "If we want to live the lives the Almighty meant us to live," he said, "we must engage upon a vigorous campaign against venereal disease, however unsavoury it may be; it is our *duty* to do it." One special feature of the Conference was the insistence that a much higher standard of education all round was needed.

B. K.

THE CO-OPERATION OF DISTRICT NURSES.

The resolution presented to the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland, at Leicester, on June 26th, urging that all health schemes touching midwifery, infant welfare, supervision of school children, and the nursing of tuberculosis should provide for the co-operation of district nurses was moved by Miss Amy Hughes, who spoke of the valuable and wide training received by district nurses, and of the intimate knowledge they gained of homes. Lady Tancred seconded, but after much discussion the resolution was considered dropped, there not being a two-thirds majority.

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