

The Midwife.

MINISTER'S MESSAGE TO NEW MIDWIVES.

Over 500 pupil-midwives taking their Final Midwifery Examination received a personal letter from the Minister of Health, Mr. Aneurin Bevan, in which he expressed the hope that the successful candidates would practise Midwifery.

In his letter Mr. Bevan said :—

"The birthrate is higher than this country has known for a quarter of a century, and there is, unhappily, a grave shortage of trained midwives. To meet this immediate need it is to you and your fellow-students, when you have passed the examination, that we must turn. This is work which the unqualified cannot do.

"The improvements in the midwife's status, salary, and conditions—including the recent service allowance to add to the Rushcliffe Scales—mean that if you decide to practise midwifery you will enjoy equitable terms of service and remuneration. Moreover, you will gain experience which will be of value both to yourself and to the community.

"But my appeal to you to enter the profession is made on wider grounds. We need your help in shaping the health and hospital services; and we need you in the midwifery profession, which is second to none in the contribution it can make to the reconstruction of Britain.

"I do not think there is any greater contribution you can make to the happiness to others."

NATIONAL UNIFORM FOR MIDWIVES

Since the preliminary steps were taken by the Central Midwives Board to establish a national uniform for Midwives, the Board has received suggestions and criticisms from a number of local authorities. After further consideration, the Board has drafted Regulations with a view to introducing the uniform with effect from February 1st, 1947.

Considerable difficulties have been experienced by tailors in obtaining a supply of material, and so far only a small number have been able to submit samples and seek approval.

List of Approved Tailors.

- Boyd Cooper, Ltd., 12, Bruton Street, W.1.
- Crichtons, Ltd., 39, Conduit Street, W.1.
- E. & R. Garrould, Ltd., 150-162, Edgware Road, W.2.
- Egerton Burnetts, Ltd., Wellington, Somerset.
- Nurses Outfitting Association, Ltd., Carlyle House, Wellington Road South, Stockport, Cheshire.
- E. J. Frankland & Co., Ltd., Marle House, London Road, South Godstone, Surrey.
- Downland Garments, Ltd. (and Cloth Merchants), 44, Bow Lane, Cheapside, E.C.4.
- The Uniform Clothing & Equipment Co., Ltd., 10 and 11, Clerkenwell Green, E.C.1.

It is hoped that the number of approved tailors will be increased and a notification of such further approvals will be circulated. Local supervising authorities wishing to place orders for uniform through their normal contractors should advise such contractors, if they are not already approved, to seek the Board's approval for making the uniform. They should submit to the Board samples of the material to be used in accordance with the specification. Provided that the samples of material are satisfactory, every effort will be made to expedite such approval.

In view of the necessity for protecting the uniform until further legislation is introduced, the number of approved makers of the badge has been deliberately restricted. The embroidered badge may be obtained from Boyd Cooper, Ltd., and the Nurses Outfitting Association, Ltd. A midwife

can obtain the metal brooch for wear with the indoor dress by making individual application to the Board in accordance with Regulation 9. Manufacture of the monogram buttons provided for in the specification is also restricted at the moment to the two firms authorised to make the embroidered badge.

Each midwife requiring the uniform will have to produce an authority in the form attached to the regulations. Copies of the regulations with the form of authority will be available shortly in a printed form, and may be obtained on request from the Board's offices.

The Board has set up a small advisory committee on uniform, on which the College of Midwives and the Association of Supervisors of Midwives are represented. This committee will be glad to consider suggestions and may recommend the amendment of the regulations from time to time.

BIRTHS HIGHEST FOR 25 YEARS

The Registrar-General for England and Wales in his Weekly Return (issued on January 25th), announces that the number of live births registered during 1946 was 820,268—the highest figure since 1921. This represents a birth rate of 19.1 per 1,000 population, which is 3.0 above that for 1945 and the highest birth rate for any year since 1923.

The number of live births registered during the December quarter of last year was 221,891. This is the highest figure recorded in any quarter since June, 1921, and the highest in any December quarter since 1906, with the exception of December, 1919, when the figure was 223,581.

The birth rate for the December quarter of 20.5 per 1,000 population was the highest in any quarter since June, 1923, and the highest in any December quarter since 1921, when the rate was the same.

STREPTOMYCIN: THE PRESENT POSITION.

CLINICAL TRIALS TO ASSESS VALUE.

Appeals are from time to time made by hospital authorities and doctors for supplies of streptomycin for the treatment of patients who are dangerously ill. This drug is not yet generally available for treatment in this country, though it is obtainable in limited quantities in America.

Clinical trials are being carried out in Britain by the Medical Research Council, and until these trials are completed it is not possible to assess the value claimed for the drug and to determine the best methods of its use. The latest American opinion indicates that its value in tuberculosis is still unproved.

While the Minister of Health does not wish to hamper individual doctors and hospitals in their endeavours to obtain any new drugs which they consider may benefit their patients, it must be emphasised that streptomycin is potentially dangerous and may cause serious ill effects in the patient, including permanent giddiness and deafness; and that insufficient is known about this drug at present to justify action by the Government to make it more freely available. For instance, in the very small number of patients with tuberculous meningitis whose life has been prolonged by the treatment, there has nearly always been permanent serious mental derangement, blindness, or deafness.

Steps are being taken to accelerate production in this country so that supplies may be available if the clinical trials prove favourable.

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