The Midwife.

International Confederation of Midwives London Congress 1954.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MIDWIVES, sponsored by the Royal College of Midwives, opened at Bedford College on September 4th for one week, and was one of the greatest events in the international history of Midwifery. Seven hundred delegates and observers attended from 50 different countries, and Dr. Nicholson J. Eastman, M.D., one of America's leading obstetricians, flew over to give the Inaugural Address.

Throughout the week papers were given by eminent obstetricians and midwives from different parts of the world, dealing with new trends in Hospital and Domiciliary Midwifery.

Many social events were arranged, including a Reception by Her Majesty's Government, and a Banquet at the Dorchester Hotel where nearly 800 guests assembled.

Several films were shown during the week, including that of the separation of the Nigerian Siamese Twins, and a new film "The British Midwife," specially made for the Congress.

The Patron of the Congress was Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and the President of the Royal College of Midwives is Miss N. B. Deane, M.B.E.

The Congress president, Miss N. B. Deane, M.B.E., having greeted the congress members, welcomed Miss E. M. Pye, president of the 1934 Congress, and Madame Jay, president of the 1953 Congress, and secretary of the International Confederation of Midwives. A warm welcome was also extended to Professor Nicholson J. Eastman, Professor of Obstetrics, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, U.S.A., and chairman of the W.H.O. Expert Committee on Maternity Care and of the recent committee on Midwifery Training. The president expressed great pleasure on behalf of all to have the Minister of Health, the Rt. Hon. Iain Macleod, P.C., M.P., who gave the opening address.

In the course of his address, the Minister spoke of the improvement in knowledge and standards of maternal care during the past 50 years and of the year by year drop in the death rate. The Minister pointed out that although we were proud of our National Health Service—the Midwifery Service did not come in with the National Health Service in 1948, but was well established years before—both in hospital and on the domiciliary side as an organised service.

The Minister alluded to the change, when under the National Health Service, every woman would be able to claim a doctor's service as a right, and many thought—the era of the professional midwife when she was considered as an independent practitioner, qualified to conduct deliveries and to care for the mother and the new-born on her own responsibility with the doctor and the hospital behind her—would be at an end, but the figures he quoted showed that although it was the standard practice to book a doctor, the great majority of mothers were actually delivered by the midwives on their own. Thus, of 152,000 domiciliary cases in 1953, when a doctor was booked and took general responsibility, 105,000 were delivered by midwives without the doctor being actually there. Out of 96,000 cases in which no doctor was booked, 91,000 were delivered by midwives on their own —"perhaps the most conclusive evidence of the high standard achieved by the profession of midwifery in the estimation of the medical profession and of the general public." In conclusion the Minister touched on Domiciliary Delivery, as to whether a confinement should be in hospital or whether it was advantageous to the mother and family to have it at home—he would study very carefully what the Congress had to say on this subject.

Professor Eastman in his inaugural address, "The Midwife and World Health," visualised the role of the midwife as far extending beyond that of a mere birth attendant:—

"In order to recall how close you midwives are to the hearts and hearthstones of families throughout the World, to a greater degree than any other public servant, the midwife enjoys the affection, the esteem and the confidence of the peoples she serves, and because of this fact her potentialities as an instructress of the masses everywhere in hygienic living are without equal. That it lies in the province of the midwife to improve maternity care goes without saying. That it lies also in her power to become our most efficacious agent in the teaching and promulgation of hygiene and preventive medicine among the underprivileged masses of the World has received inadequate emphasis. Yet this is part and parcel of the contribution which she can make to World Health."

In this magnificent World Congress it was revealed that midwives, as a body, have in their devotion to their calling over the years, in spirit and in practice, reached the ideal of vocation!

Although a large percentage are State Registered Nurses they were proud to be known by the title of midwife and did not wish for any other. (No desire to be little doctors.)

In the high tribute paid to the midwife by Professor N. J. Eastman, we salute her in her great service for World Health.

The Training and Practice of Midwives in England.

MORE THAN 56,000 WOMEN are registered as midwives in England and Wales, many of them are trained nurses, who, after taking their midwifery training return to the various branches of nursing in hospital or in the public health field at home or abroad. The number of practising midwives is more than 17,000 in England and Wales; about 75 per cent. of them are trained nurses and about 30 per cent. are married. The proportion of midwives in training who are not nurses is now only about 6 per cent. Midwifery training is controlled by the Central Midwives Board which was formed in 1902 under the first Midwives Act. There are 16 members of the Board, appointed by the Minister of Health, several medical organisations, the Royal College of Midwives and by local authorities.

This Board is responsible for the training, examination and practice of midwives and is quite a separate body from the General Nursing Council which controls the training and examination of nurses.

Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own Boards to deal with midwifery training which, however, is basically the same as that in England and Wales.

Midwives' Training.

The minimum age to begin training is 20 and the maximum age is usually 40 though sometimes older women are accepted.

There are about 250 schools in this country giving pupils a wide choice of different types of hospital and area in which they may train. Trained nurses on the general or sick children's register do one year's midwifery training and those who are not nurses do two years'. Training is divided into two parts. The first period of training is taken at the larger maternity hospitals or large midwifery departments in general hospitals. The first period of training for women who are not nurses covers 18 months and includes a preliminary course of instruction in anatomy and physiology, hygiene and theoretical and practical instruction in the principles of nursing. This preliminary course often includes attendance at a nurses' preliminary training school attached to a general hospital. Trained nurses do six months' training

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