

# The Midwife.

## Estimate of Future Births.

### 344,000 Babies Expected in First Half of Year

THE QUARTERLY ESTIMATE of the numbers of live births to be expected in England and Wales as a whole during the six months January-June of this year, was announced recently by the Registrar General.\*

The final estimate for the March quarter is 172,000 and the provisional estimate for the June quarter is 172,000 giving an estimated total of 344,000 babies in the six months.

There were 171,705 live births registered in the March quarter of 1953 and 179,464 in the June quarter of that year, a total of 351,169.

In the week ended January 23rd there were 7,632 live births registered in the 160 Great Towns of England and Wales, compared with 7,696 in the previous week. This brings the total in those towns from the first week of the year to 23,149, compared with 22,738 in the same period a year ago.

\*The Registrar General's Weekly Return No. 3, 1954, H.M.S.O., price 1s. net (or by post from P.O. Box 569, London, S.E.1, price 1s. 1½d.).

## Vital Statistics for 1953.

### Births Up—Stillbirths and Infant Deaths Down

THE REGISTRAR GENERAL'S provisional vital statistics for England and Wales for the fourth quarter of 1953 and for the whole of that year were published on January 23rd, 1954.\*

The main features of the year were :—

Births exceed those of the previous year for the first time since the peak was passed in 1947. The total was 682,007.

New low records for stillbirths and infant deaths were established.

The death-rate in the December quarter was the lowest ever recorded for that period.

### Live Births

The total live births registered for the year was 682,007, which was 8,721 higher than the total for 1952, and, indeed, 2,318 higher than for 1951. The rate per 1,000 population, which in the years 1950, 1951 and 1952 was showing signs of levelling off (15.8, 15.5 and 15.3 respectively) rose in 1953 to 15.5.

Live births registered in the fourth quarter of 1953 numbered 157,862 representing a rate of 14.2 per thousand population, compared with 157,759 (rate 14.3) and 153,995 (rate 13.9) in the same quarter of 1952 and 1951.

### Infant Mortality

In 1953 there were 18,180 deaths of children under one year of age, representing a rate of 26.8 per thousand related live births, the lowest annual rate ever recorded in this country. This rate compares with 27.6 in 1952, 29.7 in 1951 and 52.8 in 1938.

Infant deaths in the December quarter numbered 4,262, giving a rate of 26.1. This also is a record figure for a fourth quarter, the previous lowest rate for that quarter being 28.5 in 1951.

### Stillbirths

There were 15,630 stillbirths registered in the year 1953, representing a rate of 22.4 per thousand total live and still births. This was a slight improvement on the previous lowest rate of 22.6 in 1952.

The figure for the December quarter (3,764) represented a rate of 23.3, compared with rates of 23.2 and 24.2 in 1952 and 1951 respectively.

\*The Registrar General's Weekly Return No. 2, 1954, H.M.S.O., price 1s. net or by post from P.O. Box 569, London, S.E.1, price 1s. 1½d.

## Health Service Auxiliaries.

### Regulations Lay Down Qualifications

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH (Mr. Iain Macleod), under the powers of Section 66 of the National Health Service Act, 1946, has made the National Health Service Act (Medical Auxiliaries) Regulations, 1954 (S.R. & O. No. 55), which prescribe the qualifications required of persons employed as medical auxiliaries in the National Health Service. The regulations are based upon the recommendations which were made by the Cope Committees in 1951 on the qualifications of medical auxiliaries, except that the regulations are designed to prevent certain anomalies and unfairness which experience has shown would have arisen were the recommendations of the Cope Committees applied strictly.

The regulations come into operation on April 1st, 1954, and on and after that date every hospital authority, and local health authority, in England and Wales will be required to employ only such persons as are qualified in accordance with them.

The following are included for the purposes of the regulations within the definition of medical auxiliaries :—

Chiropodists, dietitians, medical laboratory technicians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, radiographers, remedial gymnasts, and speech therapists.

Those qualified are divided broadly into main groups, viz.—those who, on March 31st, 1954, come within the definition of being qualified at that date, and those who will qualify on or after April 1st, 1954. Within the former are (i) those who at that date are employed in the service of hospitals or local health authorities; (ii) those who hold the qualifications which were recommended in 1951 by the Cope Committees as appropriate; and, in addition, (iii) certain holders of qualifications given by the Joint Council of Chiropodists and Physiotherapists' Association.

In order to become qualified on or after April 1st, 1954, a person must obtain a certificate issued by one of the bodies named in the regulations as an appropriate body. These certificates will be accepted by employing authorities in the National Health Service when the Minister has indicated that the course of training and examinations to which the certificate refers have been approved by him.

In addition, to deal with exceptional cases, the Minister will keep a list of persons whom he is prepared to regard as qualified.

Similar regulations are being made by the Secretary of State for Scotland under the powers of Section 65 of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act, 1947. The two sets of regulations provide that the qualifications required in England and Wales will be acceptable in Scotland and *vice versa* and that both sets will be acceptable in Northern Ireland and *vice versa*.

### Statutory Registration

The Cope Committees also recommended that there should be statutory registration for medical auxiliaries, but because there is not yet sufficient agreement on fundamental matters it has not been found possible at present to proceed with this. Nevertheless, the Minister fully appreciates the desire among the professions for statutory registration, and is therefore setting up a working party, which representatives of the professional bodies are being invited to join, with a view to evolving a scheme which will be acceptable both to them and to him. The regulations will not in any way prejudice the possibility of the introduction of statutory registration.

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