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Editorial.

LEGISLATION FOR NURSES.—II.

The third principle to which, as we stated last week, we consider that grave objection must be taken in the Midwives' Bill, is involved in the arrangements made therein for the payment of the working expenses of the measure. Clause 8 provides that the Councils of the County or County Boroughs throughout England and Wales shall be the local supervising authorities over the midwives within their respective areas. As these Councils are composed entirely of men, and with very rare exceptions do not even comprise medical men, it follows that the Councils themselves will be incompetent, from their natural ignorance of the subject, to carry out the duties laid upon them—that is to say, "to exercise general supervision over midwives," "to investigate charges of malpractice, negligence or misconduct on the part of their midwives," and "to suspend any midwife from practice if such suspension appears necessary." Indeed, this was evidently understood, because the very unusual provision is made in the Bill that every Council may delegate its duties and powers to a Committee appointed for the purpose, and upon which women shall be eligible to serve.

Our first and cardinal objection to the system is that it places the supervision of a body of professional women in the hands of unprofessional persons. And to this arrangement there are such grave and obvious objections that we consider it will go far to invalidate any good effects which the Midwives' Act might otherwise produce. It certainly introduces a question which trained nurses must most carefully consider, in regard to future legislation for themselves. We do not hesitate to express our most earnest hope that, before such legislation is proposed for nurses, the absurdity of this method of so-

called supervision may have been conclusively demonstrated.

In the case of the Midwives' Act, this grant of authority and supervisory power to the County and Borough Councils is rendered necessary by another important principle adopted in the Act. Clause 4 provides that "there shall be payable by every woman presenting herself for examination or certificate" a fee which shall not "exceed the sum of one guinea." The Midwives' Board must each year publish "a financial statement" showing its receipts and expenditure. So far, of course, this is the principle adopted in all other State-recognised and regulated professions. But then there comes this novel and unprecedented provision:

"The Board shall submit a copy of such statement to the Privy Council, and if the statement shows any balance against the Board, and such balance is approved by the Privy Council, the Board may apportion such balance between the Councils of the several Counties and County Boroughs in proportion to the number of midwives who have given notice during the year of their intention to practise in those areas respectively, and may recover from the Councils the sum so apportioned."

In other words, for the first time, the expenses of controlling a recognised profession are thrown by Parliament upon the ratepayers. Not only has this been done in complete ignorance as to what the resulting financial burden may be, but it introduces a precedent which, as we have said, we cannot but regard as both inequitable to the public and dangerous to the profession of midwives. But, the principle having been established that the ratepayers must pay the piper, it was a necessary consequence that they should be permitted to call the tune; and so the provision for the ratepayers' supervision of the midwives, to

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