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The Midwives' Defence Union.

A General Meeting of the Certified Midwives' Defence Union, and others interested in the question, was held on Friday, April 5th, at 10, Adelphi Terrace, W.C., at 7 p.m. Dr. Stanley B. Atkinson, J.P., who presided, explained that it was of the nature of an adjourned general meeting, and reminded those present that on a recent occasion, at the Midwives' Institute, a Committee of Ways and Means was appointed to consider the advisability, desirability, and possibility of forming a Midwives' Defence Union. The Committee had held two meetings and recommended that this second general meeting should be called to receive a report.

The objects suggested by the Provisional Committee for adoption by the Union included protection, defence, and the collection of bad debts.

On the opinion of the meeting being taken, the collection of bad debts met with no support, and was consequently dropped out of the objects.

Mr. Lightbody enquired the difference between protection and defence, and the Chairman explained that the former applied mainly to the interests of midwives as a class, as, for instance, if the passage of a law restricting their legal rights were suggested; defence applied more especially to the difficulties of individual midwives. The hope of a Defence Union such as was proposed lay in the educatable folk. The younger generation of midwives might be taught to insist on their rights, but it was very difficult to persuade people advancing in years to combine or to join a new movement. For this reason it might be wise in selecting a Council to interest those having the training of midwives, and to give them the preponderance of seats on the Council, so that they might be "godmothers" to the movement, passing on the good news that a Defence Union had been formed.

The Chairman then asked Dr. St. Aubyn-Farrer to read the report, which he had drafted as Chairman of the Provisional Committee. After that there would, he said, be an open discussion, and then a second meeting in which only those who intended to join the Union were invited to take part.

Dr. St. Aubyn-Farrer then presented a report as to the objects, conditions of membership, annual subscription, and officers suggested. He further said that he considered provision should be made for inclusion on the Council, and in the position of Treasurer, of persons, other than midwives, who had a knowledge of business.

Miss Brey said if they admitted that principle

they would be starting with the very large assumption that the Midwives' Defence Union could not find the necessary business capacity amongst its own members. The Medical Defence Societies did not plead incapacity in this way, and ask outsiders to manage their affairs. Their Councils were entirely composed of their own members.

In regard to a remark which had fallen from the Chairman, while she was in favour of Matrons of Lying-In Hospitals being included on the Council, she thought it should be representative of all midwives. They were skilled workers, legally responsible for their actions, and it was not to be expected that they should be tied forever to the apron strings of the Matrons. Further, it did not follow that Matrons of Lying-In Hospitals were acquainted with the methods of conducting business at meetings, a point which should be kept in view in the selection of members of the Council.

Mr. Lightbody asked whether members would be defended at the expense of the Union, and Dr. St. Aubyn-Farrer said that if a Defence Union took up a case it paid the expenses connected with it.

Mrs. Owens mentioned a recent experience of her own in which a Defence Union would have been of use to her.

The Chairman then said that before the Union was formed he felt sure those present would like to hear what two ladies in the room, Miss Wilson, and Miss Paget, had to say. Afterwards, their lips would be sealed, for, as members of the Central Midwives' Board, they could have nothing to do with a Defence Union.

Miss Wilson said she gave the Union her benediction with her last breath, and Miss Paget that she had been studying the report of the London and Counties Medical Protection Society, and had noticed several cases in which doctors had been defended against midwives. As to the Council, she thought it should be very representative, and might usefully include hospital secretaries and solicitors, as well as midwives.

It was then put to the meeting, as a definite motion, proposed by Mrs. Lee, seconded by Miss Worrall, and supported by Miss M. O. Haydon and Mrs. Austen, "That a Midwives' Defence Union be, and now is, formed."

The names of those who desired to join such a Union were then taken, and they only were invited to take part in the second meeting.

It was decided that the name of the Society should be the Midwives' Defence Union, that membership should be open to all midwives "subject in each case to the approval of the Council,"

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