

The Central Midwives' Board.

A meeting of the Central Midwives' Board was held at Caxton House, Westminster, on Thursday, June 27th, at 2.45 p.m. Dr. Champneys presided.

REPORT OF PENAL CASES COMMITTEE.

The first business was to receive the report of the Penal Cases Committee.

The Committee recommended that, in view of the favourable reports received from Local Supervising Authorities in respect of four midwives previously censured or cautioned for offences against the rules, no further action be taken.

Unfavourable reports having been received in three instances, the Committee recommended that each midwife should be cited to appear before the Board.

The Committee recommended that Ellen Greenwood, No. 249, be severely censured for not having sent for medical assistance in the case of a breech presentation in a primipara. It also recommended that Mary Lixton, No. 2962, be censured for not advising that medical assistance should be sent for in a case of ophthalmia, and that Mary Jane White, No. 2151, be cited to appear before the Board. In connection with a letter from the Town Clerk of Southampton asking the Board to rescind its resolution of censure on Letitia Bellis, the Committee recommended that the Town Clerk be informed that the Board decline to re-open the case. The recommendation of the Committee was adopted by the casting vote of the Chairman.

The Committee recommended that Mary Chalk, No. 11,397, and Jane Jones, No. 208, be cautioned as to the strict observance of the Rules, that Annie Duncalf, No. 3659, be censured for offences against the rules, and that another midwife be called upon to furnish the explanation of charges made against her.

The Committee having considered the charges against sixteen women, recommended that each of them be cited to appear before the Board. The Report was adopted.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE.

On the recommendation of the Standing Committee, in view of the special circumstances of her case, it was agreed that Mrs. Louise Stuart should be certified under Section 2 of the Midwives' Act. A form drawn up by the Committee for the use of midwives desiring the removal of their names from the Roll was sanctioned. The West Ham Union Infirmary was added to the list of approved Training Schools.

The following medical practitioners were approved as teachers: Dr. Ursula Chaplin, Mr. Elgar Down, F.R.C.S., Ed., Dr. Mary Elizabeth Phillips, Dr. Algernon Edward Luke Wear.

The following midwives were approved for the purpose of signing Forms III. and IV.: Sarah Martha Edwards, No. 7562, and Kate McLaughtry, No. 14067.

The Board agreed to represent to the Privy Council and the Local Government Board, in connection with the "Notification of Births Bill,"

the necessity of amending Section 2 (4) so as to read as follows: "In this Act the expression, 'local authority' means the Council of a County or County Borough, except in the case of Midwives certified under the Midwives' Act, 1902, who shall notify the Local Supervising Authority constituted under that Act."

The attention of the Local Government Board was also drawn to the fact that the definition of still birth adopted by the Board had been approved by the English Branch of the General Medical Council, and by the Privy Council.

It was also decided to request the Home Office to issue directions that all certified midwives convicted in Police Courts shall be reported directly to the Central Midwives' Board.

RESOLUTION.

Sir William Sinclair then moved a resolution, of which he had given notice, which was seconded by Mr. Parker Young, and, after discussion, was unanimously carried in the following terms:

"That inasmuch as changes in the pulse and temperature are the earliest and surest indication of the onset of puerperal fever, when the disease is still amenable to treatment, this Board resolves to call the attention of Local Supervising Authorities to the importance of instructing and encouraging midwives practising within their areas in taking and recording the pulse and temperature in every case under their care."

The Chairman here left, and Mr. Fordham took the chair.

MIDWIVES' ACT AMENDMENT COMMITTEE.

In connection with the adjourned Report of the Midwives' Act Amendment Committee, the following amendments were considered desirable:

That the Board should have power of suspension as well as of removal from the Roll.

That in Section 8, Clause 3, it should be made clear that suspension when enjoined, is for the protection of patients, not necessarily punitive. In connection with Clause 1., Section 4, which runs: "No woman certified under this Act shall employ an uncertified person as her substitute," Miss Paget, in accordance with the views of the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute, which she represents, proposed the addition of the words, "provided that this Section shall not apply to pupils in training." Eventually, however, she withdrew her motion for discussion on a future occasion. The points involved in this proposition are very important, affecting both the question of training and the efficient care of the patient. Clearly the value of the training period consists in the fact that the pupil is supervised and taught while attending cases; secondly, the patient should have qualified, not unqualified, assistance. In the event of a midwife being called to more than one case at the same time, she should not, in our view, send an unqualified pupil as her substitute, but should give the patient the opportunity of summoning another certified midwife, or a medical practitioner. Such a situation would only be likely to arise in the practice of midwives working single-handed, as in all well-managed institutions a sufficient staff is kept to meet such emergencies.

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