

## The Midwife.

### Points at the Nursing and Midwifery Conference.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14th.

DIRECT REPRESENTATION OF MIDWIVES.

The first question discussed at the Nursing and Midwifery Conference at the Grafton Galleries on April 14th (the opening day), was the Direct Representation of Midwives on the Central Midwives' Board.

The chair was taken by Mrs. Glanville, certified midwife, who referred to the resignation by Miss Wilson of her seat on the Central Midwives' Board as a protest against the exclusion of midwives from direct representation on the Departmental Committee of the Privy Council now sitting to consider the working of the Midwives' Act and the Training and Supply of Midwives.

#### RESOLUTION I.

Mrs. LAWSON, President of the National Association of Midwives (the headquarters of which are in Manchester) referred to the question of direct representation as a "good old hardy annual." She moved the following resolution:

"That in the opinion of this Conference the time is now opportune when midwives should be represented on the Central Midwives' Board, and all local supervising authorities."

In proposing the Resolution, Mrs. Lawson said that, although she had felt that the Midwives' Act might press hardly on some individual midwives, yet, as she thought it would be for the public good, she had supported the movement to obtain it, but in the Act, as passed, the interests of the working midwife were completely ignored. In the composition of the Central Midwives' Board, the medical profession predominated, and, with some noble exceptions, the medical profession were antagonistic to midwives. It was not to the interests of the midwifery profession that it should be entirely under that of medicine, or indeed that any profession should be controlled by the members of another.

Again, though the medical men on the Board could not know the practical difficulties with which midwives had to contend, the mind of the lay members was apt to be biased by those whom they presumed to be possessed of expert knowledge. Midwives, therefore, worked under great disadvantages.

Until midwives had direct representation on the Board which governed them they could not raise their profession, but if they had some degree of self-government a better class of women would be attracted to it. They must get away from the snobbish idea that they must induce a doctor to fight their cause. Was it not presumptuous to expect the members of another profession to fight their battles? They must combine, agitate, educate, and never lose sight of the fact that they needed Direct Representation.

She said further: "I would urge all qualified midwives to get away from the cant idea that you must have a notability to do the work for you. Do it yourselves."

The speaker said that the Association, of which she was President, had written asking for the inclusion of a midwife in the Departmental Committee of the Privy Council. They had had a letter back to say that the authorities did not think that the working of the Act affected them very much!

Then they got a Member of Parliament to ask a question from the floor of the House. They did not intend to let the matter drop until they had secured representation.

Mrs. MALCOLM, Corresponding Secretary of the National Association of Midwives, seconded the resolution. She said that it was recently claimed by a speaker at a public meeting that women had been consulted on every line of the Midwives' Act. She did not know who the women might be, but it did frequently happen that though women were consulted, the advice of men was acted upon. She drew attention to the fact that the State said the midwife must call in a medical practitioner in cases of abnormality, but it was a grievance that they could only call in the parish doctor. She thought that a midwife should be allowed to call in any doctor in case of emergency, and that the State should be responsible for his fee, and, moreover, that in midwifery cases what the patient was unable to pay, the midwife's fee should be secured to her just as much as the doctor's.

Another grievance was that the supervising officer went over a midwife's house as though he were a warrant officer in search of a criminal. She considered that due notice should be given of a visit. The present procedure was degrading. An Englishman's house was supposed to be his castle, but it did not seem like it. She had much pleasure in seconding the resolution.

Miss Breay took part in the discussion which followed, and said that the constitution of the Central Midwives' Board was radically wrong, and that if Miss Rosalind Paget resigned her seat there was no guarantee that there would be one midwife upon the Board.

Miss Berlon also said, in relation to midwives' earning capacity, that women's wages were going down year by year, and averaged 7s. 6d. a week.

#### RESOLUTION II.

Mrs. Malcolm then moved the following Resolution:—

"That this meeting of midwives, assembled in Conference, strongly condemns visits being paid by Health Visitors to their patients until the midwife in charge has finished her attendance on them."

Mrs. Malcolm explained that she was not against the visits of Health Visitors, but they should not overlap those of the midwife who, according to the rules of the Central Midwives' Board, was responsible for the comfort of the mother and the dieting

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