

The Midwife.

The Central Midwives' Board.

A special meeting of the Central Midwives' Board, to consider what action should be taken as to the recommendations of the Midwives' Act Committee, was held at the Board Room, Caxton House, S.W., on Thursday, October 28th. Dr. F. H. Champneys presided.

The Secretary read a letter from the Medical Secretary of the British Medical Association.

Dr. Stanley Atkinson had given notice of a series of motions, which were considered seriatim.

On Dr. Atkinson's motion the Board approved:—

(1) *Adequate and certain remuneration of medical practitioners called in, under the Board's regulations, to assist midwives.* It declined to endorse the second half of Dr. Atkinson's resolution: "Such payments to be made by the Local Supervising Authority, and not by the Poor-Law Guardians."

Mr. Parker Young said that when he expressed this view to the Midwives' Act Committee the Committee pointed out that the Poor-Law had already the necessary machinery, while the Local Supervising Authority had not.

The Hon. Mrs. Charles Egerton confirmed this, saying that the L.S.A. had no means of making inquiries as to the patient's ability to pay, in connection with the recovery of fees, except through the Inspector of Midwives, and it would be an unpleasant and unfortunate duty to charge her with.

Miss Paget said there were instances of the bullying of lying-in women by Poor-Law officials, in respect to their ability to pay the fee of the medical man called in, the day after the baby was born. The L.S.A. was at present the authority over the midwife, and it was bringing in another to introduce the Poor-Law.

Dr. Stanley Atkinson objected to placing the duty of recovering fees on the Poor-Law Authorities. A man who had saved the 10s. or 15s. required for a midwife's fee was in no sense a pauper, and it was unreasonable that he should have the taint of pauperism imposed upon him if a doctor, on the advice of the midwife, was called in, in emergency, and that the relieving officer should make inquiries as to his means. In Cardiff, Liverpool, and Manchester the Local Supervising Authorities gave relief on loan, and what had been done there could be done elsewhere. Local feeling in districts where midwives worked was strong against making the Poor-Law Guardians the authority, and if this were done some husbands would not send for the doctor. Dr. Atkinson further held that if the Guardians were made responsible for the fee they would insist on the Poor-Law Medical Officer being summoned, but the Chairman negatived this view.

(2) *More definite powers of "Suspension" of midwives, whether by the Local Supervising Authority, or by the Central Midwives' Board.* This was carried *nem con.* Miss Paget pointed out that sus-

pension of midwives for disinfecting purposes, imposed by Local Supervising Authorities at present, was very hard on midwives. Sometimes the suspension lasted three months, and frequently for six weeks, whereas the Board held that 24 hours was a sufficient period for adequate disinfection.

(3) *Subvention from public funds of midwives who are unable to maintain themselves in sparsely populated and poor districts.* This was carried by three votes to one. Mr. Golding Bird said that in the locality in which he resided it was necessary to call on voluntary aid to help to support the midwife. He considered that, to carry out a Statute of the State, reliance should be placed on subvention rather than voluntary aid.

The Hon. Mrs. Charles Egerton suggested that this help should be extended to independent midwives as well as to Associations providing them.

(4) *Revision of the constitution of the Central Midwives' Board so as to afford two representatives, to be chosen without restrictions, of the Midwives' Institute.* Three members of the Board of the six present (not counting the Chairman) voted for this, and one against, the Chairman explaining that he did not vote because he had signed the report of the Midwives' Act Committee, and agreed to that and that only.

It will be remembered the Committee recommended that the members of the Board should be "increased from nine to twelve, by giving an additional nominee to the Lord President of the Council, and a representative each to the Local Government Board, the British Medical Association, and the Society of Medical Officers of Health. The member appointed by the Incorporated Midwives' Institute should, in future, be a certified midwife, instead of a medical practitioner, and the representation of the Royal British Nurses' Association should be discontinued."

In claiming two representatives for the Midwives' Institute, Dr. Atkinson stated that it represented as many practising midwives as any other body.

Miss Paget, who seconded Dr. Atkinson's motion, said she should be sorry if the Midwives' Institute could not be represented by a medical man. The Privy Council suggested an enormous increase in the medical members of the Board, and the Midwives' Institute thought it was entitled to an increase of representation. Why the Midwives' Institute should desire the opportunity of increasing the medical members of the Board still further is not apparent. The right of the Midwives' Institute to representation rests (1) upon its work in promoting the Act; and (2) because it is an Association of Midwives; but if amongst its 600 or 700 midwife members it cannot find one, or two, to represent it effectively, then its claims to representation at all falls to the ground, for the selection of medical members of the Board is most fittingly performed by members of that profession.

Miss Paget's point of view seems to be one not

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