

The Midwife.

Direct Representation of Midwives on the Midwives' Board.

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President of the National Association of Midwives.

In 1902, for the first time, Parliament stepped in to regulate the Midwifery Profession; previously midwives managed their own work in their own way, and trained in the institutes of their own choosing. Regulations were undoubtedly necessary as a safeguard to the general public, and also, we believe, to the real interest of our profession, if properly framed and administered. With regulations, as such, we have no quarrel, but as individuals and as a profession we do keenly feel the injustice of being denied a voice in the counsels of the administrative bodies. The regulations would have been of a far different character had a strong national body of midwives existed with power to elect one or more of their members—*working midwives*—to represent their views on the C.M.B.

It may be contended that midwives would look after their own interests only, and take a selfish attitude generally, but we have the interests of general public at heart; but if this was feared, why give another—a rival interest—so much representation, and with no more guarantee for their greater solicitude concerning the public safety?

Far more logical would it be to have barred the whole professional interest, whether doctor or midwife, and have left to outsiders the task of regulation.

Take some of the regulations:—

1. Breech cases. Take breech cases in primiparæ. Although we know the treatment is to leave to nature, we are compelled to send for a medical man. Whatever may be said as to the need for an untrained woman to do this, surely it is not necessary for the trained midwife.

2. Ophthalmia Neonatorum. Different treatment is meted out to the midwife and medical man. A midwife is, *under penalty*, to report such cases, but in a good many districts a medical man has a small fee for reporting the same.

3. Compulsory notification of rise of temperature. In my district the medical man has a fee for this; the midwife is suspended. If in a rise of temperature disinfection is necessary, should it not be doubly so for the medical

man, considering he has so much other infectious work to do. If it is necessary for the well-being of the community that the midwife should be disinfected, why not apply the same regulation to the medical man, and so remove the feeling amongst patients that it is only the incompetence of the midwife that has occasioned this?

Medical practitioners not under supervision themselves, etc.

4. Records, etc. Payment for compulsory notification by medical practitioner, penalty for failure to notify same to the midwife; why not apply the same rule to all?

In so many cases there is preferential treatment. Why? Because the whole administration is in the hands of a rival interest, which not only dominates the Central Midwives' Board but all the Local Supervising Authorities through the country.

Take the composition of the Central Midwives' Board:—Appointed by Lord President of the Council, a medical man, a woman *not* a midwife; Royal College of Surgeons, a medical man; Society of Apothecaries, a medical man; Incorporated Midwives' Institute, a medical man; Association of County Councils, a lawyer; Queen Victoria Jubilee Nurses, a woman *not a practising midwife*; Royal British Nurses' Association, a woman *not a midwife*.

So you see the midwives of the country were not taken into account at all when representation was given.

Now take the composition of the Supervising Authority of my own district:—

The Lord Mayor.

Twelve Councillors, of whom *three are doctors*.

Four co-opted members, *all doctors*.

The Medical Officer of Health and the Supervisor, again *both doctors*.

So, you see, here the preponderance of opinion is medical, as the lay person is always liable to be influenced by a professional element.

Note the new proposals. We claim that we should have a fair share of representation before the medical interest gets additional strength.

The Bill to amend the Midwives' Act, introduced by the Lord President of the Council, provides that the Central Midwives' Board shall consist of two persons to be appointed by the Lord President of the Council (one a

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