

The Midwife.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

A meeting of the Central Midwives' Board was held at the Board Room, Caxton House, Westminster, S.W., on Thursday, March 13th.

A letter was received from the Clerk of the Council stating that the Financial Statement submitted by the Central Midwives' Board showing an adverse balance of £2,682 16s. 11d. had been approved by their Lordships for the purpose of apportionment between County Councils and County Boroughs.

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE.

On the Report of the Standing Committee the following business was dealt with:—

A letter, addressed to the Chairman was read asking for information as to the payment of Sickness Benefit on the certificate of a midwife. The case stated was that of a woman who was entitled to sickness and disablement benefit as well as to maternity benefit. The midwife who delivered her signed both certificates, but as the Insurance Committee required the signature of a medical practitioner before sanctioning the payment of sickness and disablement benefit the woman had to refund the 15s. paid over to her. It was hard on the woman, more especially as for signing a similar certificate a doctor had charged 15s. The advice and assistance of the Board was sought in this matter.

The Board decided to reply that it has no jurisdiction to regulate payments under the Insurance Act, but that it would forward the letter to the Privy Council and the Insurance Commission for them to deal with.

The Standing Committee further suggested the adoption of the following recommendation:—

That it seems somewhat hard to the Board that a woman entitled to disablement as well as to maternity benefit in respect of a confinement should be obliged to procure the signature of a medical practitioner when she has exercised her option and put herself under the care of a midwife.

Mr. Parker Young said that he felt that there was a great difficulty in the Board meddling in this matter, which was not in its province, but in that of the Insurance Commissioners. All approved societies had certain rules, one being that to obtain sickness and disablement benefit every member must send a certificate from a Registered Medical Practitioner. A midwife in the above case would have to decide whether the patient was suffering from disease. Moreover, lying-in women were not ill for a month. He had known women at the wash tub on the fifth day, and in Ireland it was usual for them to be up again on the eighth day. A month was longer

than necessary. He considered that the above recommendation proposed to put into the hands of midwives power to usurp the functions of medical practitioners. It was not much for the protection of a Society that it should have a certificate from a doctor. He thought it would bring discredit on the Board to make recommendations concerning matters with which it had nothing to do. At any rate, he wished the public to know that one member of the Board felt strongly that it should not muddle and meddle about. He moved that the recommendation of the Standing Committee as embodied in the above paragraph be omitted.

Mr. Golding Bird said that in the abstract Mr. Parker Young was right; but the concrete case before them was one in which a woman was herself insured for 7s. 6d. on her own account; he thought that the illness of confinement, which could hardly be called illness in the ordinary sense, was one of which they could take cognizance; and that a midwife could give the necessary certificate, to enable a lying-in woman to obtain the sickness and disablement benefit in respect of her confinement, if entitled to it; as well as the maternity benefit.

We consider that the certificate given by the midwife should be limited to the fact that she has delivered the mother of a child on a given date; this would be simply a record of fact, not a question of diagnosis—but on this certificate a Society would certainly be justified in paying disablement benefit to a woman entitled to it on the birth of her child.

Mr. Parker Young's motion was not seconded, and the recommendation was adopted.

Letters were read from the Medical Officer of Health for the County of Durham, asking the Board's ruling on the question of prohibiting a midwife from attending cases of infectious disease at the same time as she is engaged on midwifery work.

It was agreed that the reply be that a woman acting as described would be amenable to the jurisdiction of the Board; and further that the Board notes the point, in view of future revision of the rules.

A letter was read from the County Medical Officer for Hampshire, asking whether a midwife may send a pupil under her instruction to attend a case of confinement, while she herself is absent at another case.

It was agreed that the reply be that in such a case the midwife is answerable.

A letter was read from a certified midwife, complaining of midwifery practice by uncertified women in Carnarvon.

It was agreed that a copy of the correspondence be forwarded to the Privy Council.

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