

Dr. Robert Charles Robertson and of Dr. Samuel Wilson for approval under Rule C.1. (2) granted *pro hac vice*.

The applications of the following midwives for approval under the same rule were granted:—Miss A. D. Garden, Maternity Home, Leicester (for 6 months); Miss J. S. Griffiths; Miss B. M. E. Hesketh, Sister of Maternity Ward, St. Bartholomew's Hospital; Miss M. H. Jones; Miss E. E. Malling, and Miss E. Taggart.

MIDWIFERY CONFERENCE.

Miss Rosalind Paget presided at the Midwifery Section of the Conference now in progress at the L.L.C. Technical Institute next to the Horticultural Hall, Vincent Square, S.W., on Tuesday afternoon. The first paper, and the one which aroused discussion, was that by Miss Alice Gregory on "Midwives and the Maternity Benefit." Miss Gregory said that revolutions take place in our midst without our finding them out, and such a revolution was taking place at the present time. Some people felt that the knell of midwifery as a profession for midwives had been rung, and others that we stand on the verge of a new era for the practising midwife. What would happen in the future depended on the proper realization of the fact that we had come to a parting of the ways, and that in the future things might be far better for both midwives and patients.

In the past mothers had suffered great discomfort, and infants had died by the thousand, they had lost their eyesight and been martyrs to indigestion. There had been a fixed belief among midwives that babies must satisfy themselves at the breast or must be fed on milk and barley-water in the proportion of 1 to 3, and the result had been disastrous. Midwives very badly needed a longer training, but how was it to be secured? How could pupil midwives be induced to pay larger training fees when they were going to earn starvation wages? How could training schools charge lower fees when they were so badly supported that they lived largely on the fees received from pupils? The possibility of an increasing starvation wage was always before the midwife. To obtain a living wage midwives crammed in more cases than they could properly attend, with the result that, for the successful midwife, life was a perpetual grind all day and most of the night. As for reading to keep up to date, recreation, or church-going, they were out of the question.

All that could now be altered by the simple machinery of the National Insurance Act, under which Maternity Benefit was insured, which provided money for the poor mother enabling her to obtain the skilled assistance so essential to her. It was sometimes objected that the Maternity Benefit was not intended to be paid over to the midwife; Miss Gregory contended that the primary need of the working mother was skilled assistance, which was even more important than more food for a sick stomach.

Miss Gregory considered that midwives attending insured persons should claim 15s. at least for their services per case. She thought they were held back by the bogey of competition and that they should have the courage to stand out. The training schools were great sinners, inasmuch as they charged lower fees than independent midwives could afford to work for. At the same time it was sometimes forgotten that the hospital patient gave herself for the instruction of pupils, as part payment. Miss Gregory hoped that, when an Amending Act to the Insurance Act was passed, provision would be made for the money to be paid directly, in cash to the mother. Misapplication of the grant was going on; but, if Tommie must have new boots out of it, at least let him know that his mother was giving them to him.

Miss Gregory touched on the propriety of paying the maternity benefit into the hands of the unmarried girl, to which she is averse. She objects to the State paying away money as the reward of immorality and considers that lying-in homes of the lowest of the low type will spring up, employ midwives at the cheapest possible rate, and manipulate the money. It was asked what did it matter to anyone else, except herself, how the mother behaved? Did it not matter to the poor little bastard? Miss Gregory said that when attending a married mother with a healthy baby she was never asked: "Do you think the baby will live?" With an unmarried mother she was always asked this question, not once, but many times, and almost invariably the wish was father to the thought, and the baby died, after a few weeks of unwanted existence.

Other papers presented were concerned with "The Professional Outlook of the Midwife" and "Inspection."

Miss Mona Wilson, one of the Insurance Commissioners, who was present, replied to a number of questions in regard to the Insurance Act. Miss Tait McKay elicited that in the case of a deposit contributor the liability of the Insurance Committee for the doctor's fee was restricted to the amount paid in by the contributor, and in reply to a question as to whether midwives were entitled to sign certificates for sickness benefit Miss Wilson said that depended entirely on the rules of individual societies.

THE MIDWIVES' SECTION OF THE I.N.A.

The important announcement is made that a special section of the Irish Nurses' Association has been formed to deal with matters of interest to midwives, and those midwives wishing to join should write to Miss Ramsden, Rotunda Hospital, Miss Joy, Coombe Hospital, Miss Keating, National Maternity Hospital, and Miss Michie, 63, Dawson Street, Dublin. At present midwives in Ireland are unorganised, and there is no professional organisation dealing with their work or fees, which is no doubt the reason why the latter are so often fixed at a rate which reduces midwives to the ranks of sweated labour.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)