

present they had the power to inspect the practice of any midwife, but had not the power to inspect any house unless to their knowledge a certified midwife or an uncertified midwife was in charge of the case.

The gist of the petition before referred to was that it was necessary to obtain control over premises used as lying-in homes in order to safeguard unmarried mothers entitled to maternity benefit under the National Health Insurance Act, and to guard against the desertion of children after birth, infanticide, and the evil influence of undesirable homes.

Mrs. JAMES GOW.

Mrs. James Gow, wife of the Headmaster of Westminster School, who said she had had twenty-eight years' experience in rescue and preventive work, stated that she thought there was a very crying need for the supervision of lying-in homes, especially since the passing of the National Insurance Act. She considered that the conditions under which the homes worked, and the secretive kind of method incidental to them favoured nefarious and irregular practices. She thought that by far the largest proportion of cases in these homes were those of unmarried women, and that a certain demand for concealment existed. People came from the country in the hope of concealment, so there were naturally more of such cases in London in proportion to those in other towns.

As proof of her contention of how necessary it was to do something to safeguard the unmarried mother in connection with the Insurance Act, the witness said that a co-worker with her on the Public Morality Council was talking to women who were working on the streets, and one of the older women told her that she intended to give up the life in order that when the Insurance Act came in she could take girls into her home. She mentioned the incident at the London Diocesan Council for Penitentiary Work, and a clergyman present said he could confirm that from something which had come under his own knowledge in his own parish.

Questioned as to the case brought to her notice of a young girl lying dead and fever-stricken in one of these homes, Mrs. Gow said the case was a very bad one. The matron of the home was a very stupid woman, and the death rate there was 10 per cent.

The witness further stated that some of the better class homes would not be any the worse for a little supervision and inspection. Some of the matrons had not had a wide experience, though they were much improving; they had, for instance, no knowledge of venereal disease, and patients became infected. People in these homes were sometimes in a highly contagious condition. Necessary precautions were not taken, unless the matron-in-charge had knowledge which it was hoped all matrons would have sooner or later, and instances had been found of girls sent to these homes and coming back diseased. Some of the workers had also been infected owing to the conditions of the homes. Where the proprietors

or the keeper of the home were unscrupulous, many nefarious practices, including the procuring of abortion, took place.

The witness instanced the case of a factory girl who got into trouble and went to live with the parents of the young man about six weeks before the birth of the child. She paid them 6s. a week and worked at her employment till the last moment possible. The lady interested in her did not find her till about four days later. She was lying on a pile of rags on the floor, without bedclothes. The baby had no clothes on, and both mother and child were actually starving. In a corner were two other babies about the same age. Whose children they were did not transpire. She was insured by the Prudential. The witness said she would like particularly to emphasise that these people were the parents of the young man.

She would like also to read one sentence from a letter she had had that morning from Mrs. Bramwell Booth. "I do know that procurers and others who are interested in leading girls astray definitely seek for maternity cases." She thought that the proposals of the County Council if carried into effect would do a great deal towards stopping what had been going on. She considered it the best way that could possibly have been thought of.

The witness was of opinion that where a girl went wrong in the first instance, and for the first time had a child, that it was the most critical period in her life that could be imagined, because if she had a helping hand she might go straight ever afterwards, and, if not, she was almost forced to go down by stress of circumstances, and every influence brought to bear upon her then was very strong indeed. In some of the existing homes the existing influence was very much the reverse of a redeeming one.

We consider the proceedings and evidence in regard to this Bill so important that we propose to devote considerable space to their consideration and shall continue our report in our next issue.

#### THE EXPENSES OF THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

That the expenses of the Central Midwives Board affect the expenditure of Local Authorities, and consequently the pockets of the ratepayers, is evident from the report of the Midwives Act Committee of the London County Council which at its last meeting informed the Council that on May 6th, 1913, it approved the maintenance vote for 1913-14, amounting to £760, in respect of the expenses of the Council as the local supervising authority for the Administrative County of London under the Midwives Act, 1902. The expenditure under the vote has, however, amounted to £769 15s. 6d., or an excess of £9 15s. 6d. This excess is principally due to the fact that the proportion of the deficit in the accounts of the Central Midwives Board, payable by the Council, was greater than had been anticipated.

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