

The Midwife.

STATE SUPPORT OF MOTHERHOOD.

The following Resolution has been placed for discussion on the Agenda of the Trade Union Congress next week by the National Agricultural Labourers and Rural Workers Union:—

"This Congress warmly supports the principle underlying the scheme for mothers' pensions now in operation in thirty of the States of North America, which recognises the valued services rendered to the community by mothers who tend and cherish their children in the home; it urges that a scheme on similar lines be established in this country, so that no mother who worthily discharges this great service should be brought under the operation of the Poor Law or prevented by economic stress from discharging it adequately and well."

The American Scheme, as originated by Judge Neil, whereby a necessitous mother is subsidised or pensioned by the State to enable her to look after her own children, instead of other people being paid to do so, was recently described in this Journal.

THE AUSTRALIAN MATERNITY ALLOWANCE.

Judge Henry Neil, whose address on the Mothers' Pension System, of which he is the originator, was listened to with so much pleasure and interest when delivered at the Central Hall, Westminster, in Baby Week, has contributed an article on the Australian Maternity Allowance to *Maternity and Child Welfare*, from which we quote.

In the Commonwealth of Australia, amongst much of the most advanced legislation that has been produced anywhere in the world for the social happiness of a people, there exists a measure which five years ago was brought into existence without much publicity, with the engaging modesty that characterises the Australian when he tackles a big subject.

The Australian maternity allowance is a thing which stands by itself. It is unique. It is a free gift of the nation to those to whom it is ever in debt—the mothers of its children.

The method of the grant is delightfully simple. To every woman who gives birth to a child, either in Australia or on board a ship proceeding from one port to another in the territories of the Commonwealth, a sum of £5 is paid by the Commonwealth Treasury. Most State grants are loaded with many "buts." The maternity allowance has only those which are needed to safeguard

it from imposition. It asks for no contribution from the recipient, either before or after the event. Simply it is laid down that it shall be payable only to women who are inhabitants of Australia or intend to settle in that favoured country. And the allowance is naturally made only in respect of a child born alive, or one that is certified to as being, in the medical term, "viable," i.e., one capable of sustaining life. But the essential point of the scheme is that the money is paid to the mother. Around her person circles the whole principle of the measure. For in their wisdom the Australian statesmen have laid it down as a safe formula that a mother should be provided with the means necessary to protect her own health and that of the future citizens of Australia in the best interests of the Commonwealth. And, further, that in the providing of this simple humanitarian comfort there shall not attach to it any stigma of charity; for such a condition would be the surest kind of insult to the independent pride of the Australian people.

Simple means are provided for conveying the money to the mother. A minimum number of documents is presented, in ordinary cases, for the certificate of the mother's attendant. Where the child is not born alive, or dies within twelve hours after birth, a medical certificate (unless the case be exceptional) must be furnished certifying that the child was a viable child.

The Act of the Federal Parliament which initiated the grant was introduced in 1912 by the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Andrew Fisher, now the High Commissioner of his country in London. It should be remembered, always as a record in such matters, that the cost of administration amounts to something like 1½ per cent. So that it may be established that the allowance is availed of by all classes in Australia, it is administered at a minimum of expense, and with a maximum of facility. And it is incontestable that already it has saved uncounted suffering, has promoted previously unrealised comfort, and has raised motherhood in Australia to the level of definite recognition.

Sister Olive, late Head Midwife, and Sister French, late Sister at the General Lying-in Hospital, York Road, Lambeth, have now settled into their new home at Paget House, 59, Loughborough Park, S.W. 9, where no doubt many of their friends and former pupils will speedily pay them a visit. They are still in touch with the York Road Hospital, as they have opened a training school for midwives and monthly nurses affiliated to it.

They also receive private patients who can either be attended by midwives or by their own doctors as they prefer.

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