

# The Midwife.

## NATIONAL BABY WEEK.

### CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION.

On Monday, July 1st, the National Conference on Maternal and Infant Welfare and the Educational Mothercraft Exhibition were opened at the Central Hall, Westminster, by the Dowager Marchioness of Londonderry, who said it afforded her the greatest possible pleasure to open an exhibition of every possible appliance for bringing up children in the best manner. So many children were born and so few came to maturity that she welcomed any knowledge which would teach mothers and potential mothers—as well as fathers—to bring up their children healthy and well.

On behalf of the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland, whose Child Welfare Committee organized the Exhibition, the President (Mrs Ogilvie Gordon) expressed its thanks to Lady Londonderry

At three o'clock, the Conference was inaugurated by a Mass Meeting, at which Major Waldorf Astor presided. After paying a tribute to Lord Rhondda, who, when at the Local Government Board, with the true instincts of a statesman, had grasped the fundamental principle that the horrible waste of child life must be reduced and that the immediate creation of a Ministry of Health was a necessity, to co-ordinate the Health efforts of all Departments, he spoke of the Departmental jealousy which delayed such co-ordination, and said that the first essential was the amalgamation of existing officials in a department engaged in fighting against disease, instead of their being engaged in fighting one another.

The first speaker was the Bishop of Birmingham who moved the following resolution:—

“ This meeting being confidently assured that the existing rate of infant mortality is unnecessary and uneconomic and the cause of much misery, calls upon the electors to demand complete and effective action from all candidates for and Members of Parliament or Municipal Councils

for the better protection of the mothers and children of the Nation ”

Referring to environment as it affects the mother and child, he said there were two main influences on the character of a child—one heredity the other environment There might be some difference of opinion as to the effect of heredity, but there was none as to environment. He instanced the boys brought up in Poor Law schools, 98 per cent. of whom did well because their characters developed in good conditions. No true community, said the Bishop, could shirk its duty to the up-growing citizen, and had no right to expect to endure if it neglected infant life. We asked of the State that it should safeguard the mother and child, that girls should understand the sacred duty of their office, and receive due instruction in their future duties. He hoped no girl would grow up without three months' experience in these matters; he would prefer to substitute years for months.

Then there was the wage problem. No married man should receive pay which did not enable him to support his wife who was bearing children. There was also the problem of the unmarried mother. What-

ever the moral offence of the father or mother, the child should not suffer.

Mrs. Pember Reeves had said that motherhood was the most sweated and the worst paid of all the professions. He refused to ask people to have numbers of children under wretched conditions and unsuitable environment. A Department of Government was required to deal with these matters. At present the child was struggled for



MOTHERHOOD.

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