

provement of the vitality of both mother and child."

#### DEBATE.

MR. GEORGE THORNE said he rose to refer to one point relating to Clause 12 to which reference had already been made. He understood that the Right Honble. Gentleman wished to reserve discussion on this point to the Committee stage, but, if he were able to make any statement at this stage, it might considerably reduce the time required for the Committee stage. He pointed out the memorandum of the Bill distinctly indicated that the measure was proposed in such a way that all contentious matter was avoided. The question raised in Clause 12 was a distinctly contentious matter. The County Councils very strongly objected to Clause 12, which robbed them of the power they at present possessed of delegating their powers to District Councils, and he hoped the Right Honble. Gentleman would be able to indicate that he did not intend to proceed with that Clause, and so avoid discussion on the Committee stage.

SIR JOHN HARMOOD-BANNER endorsed the remarks of the previous speaker. He urged that the Memorandum said all contentious matter was avoided, yet Clause 12 was contrary to the very strongly expressed opinion of the Municipal and County Council Associations of the Kingdom, and that it was rather curious to call the measure non-contentious when that was the position. The representatives of the County Councils and Municipal Associations had a strong view upon this question, and they did not like to have the opinion of the House of Lords foisted upon them by stating that this was a non-contentious question when, as a matter of fact, these Associations all disapproved of it.

#### CLAIM FOR MORE WOMEN ON MIDWIVES BOARD.

MR. HANDEL BOOTH supported the view of the previous speakers. He drew attention to Clause 1, and wished to have it clearly understood that the word "person" in that Clause included women. As things were developing at present there was a general recognition that women must more and more be called into the counsels of the nation. If they could have an assurance from the Government that they contemplated, under Clause 1, having the freedom to appoint more women—he suggested possibly a midwife, providing a suitable candidate came forward—he thought the House would regard it as a distinct step in advance.

MAJOR HILLS said, in relation to Clause 12, that the House must not assume that all the arguments were on the side of his hon. friends who had spoken. There was a very strong case the other way which he and other members of the House were prepared to make at the proper time. Since the Memorandum had been referred to, and stress laid on the fact that it stated contentious matter had been withdrawn from the Bill, he directed the attention of the House to the fact that the Memorandum also stated that the Bill brought the law of England and Wales into line with the law at pre-

sent in force in Scotland and Ireland, and that that uniformity could not be effected unless Clause 12 remained in its present form.

#### MR. HAYES FISHER'S REPLY. DIRECT REPRESENTATION CONCEDED.

In reply to Mr. Handel Booth, Member for Pontefract, MR. HAYES FISHER stated that under Clause 1 it would be quite possible to increase the number of women now on the Central Midwives Board. He said further: "I entirely share his view that in all this maternity and child welfare legislation we shall need more and more the services and special knowledge of women."

"It will be possible, if it is thought desirable, to give the midwives themselves direct representation upon that Board."

In regard to Clause 12 he expressed himself as having a very open mind, but indicated a certain preference in his own mind, not on this subject only, but upon many other subjects. He thought generally it was wise to give a discretionary power, subject to the sanction of the Local Government Board. He did not think it wise to close the door altogether upon the power of delegation by these local bodies, but he assured the House that he had a very open mind on the question and that he had purposely kept it open until they debated the whole matter in Committee.

The Question was then put and agreed to.

The Bill was accordingly read a second time.

#### THE MIDWIVES BILL PASSED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

On Monday, on the Committee stage of the Midwives Bill, Mr. Hayes Fisher said, in the House of Commons, it was the intention of the Privy Council to include midwives as representatives on the Central Board. The first 11 clauses of the Bill were passed rapidly, but there was a discussion on the 12th clause for the repeal of section 9 of the Act of 1902, which enabled county councils to delegate their powers and duties under the Act to district councils.

SIR J. BOYTON moved an amendment to ensure that the right of the London County Council to delegate its powers to the metropolitan borough councils would be continued. SIR R. ADKINS, who preferred the clause as it stood, suggested that in no case ought delegation to be permitted, except on the initiative of the county council and with the approval of the Local Government Board. CAPTAIN BARNETT argued that borough councils ought not to be deprived of the powers which they now possessed.

SIR C. HOBHOUSE said that in every rural area where delegation had been put in force there had been a failure of the Act. After further discussion the amendment, having been opposed by Mr. Hayes Fisher, President of the Local Government Board, was withdrawn, and on a division clause 12 was carried by 65 votes to 38. The remaining clauses and the report stage were agreed to, and the Bill was read a third time.

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