

The Midwife.

THE MIDWIVES' ACT AMENDMENT BILL

On Tuesday, July 2nd, as we briefly notified last week, the House of Lords resolved itself into Committee to consider the Midwives Bill, the Earl of Donoughmore being in the chair.

FUTURE REVISION OF CONSTITUTION OF CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD.

Clause I of the Midwives' Act Amendment Bill is important, because, if passed into law, it confers on the Central Midwives' Board of England powers which, so far, it has not possessed. It provides that:—

1. (i) The Central Midwives' Board may at any time represent to the Privy Council that it is expedient to modify the constitution of the Board, either by

(a) increasing or diminishing the number of persons appointed by any body or person; or
(b) abolishing the power of appointment by any body or person; or

(c) conferring on any body or person a power of appointment of one or more persons; or

(d) altering the term of office or qualifications of any members.

The Privy Council is then to cause such representation to be laid before both Houses of Parliament; and, if within forty days, either House presents an address to His Majesty, declaring that the representation, or any part thereof, ought not to be given effect to, no further proceedings shall be taken in respect of the representation in regard to which the address has been presented; otherwise, it shall be lawful for His Majesty, by Order in Council, to give effect to the same.

This provision is made both in the Midwives (Scotland) Act, 1915, and the Midwives (Ireland) Act, 1918; but the Amending Bill makes no provision for "bringing the English Act into line with those in the other parts of the United Kingdom," by the inclusion of certified midwives upon their governing body.

A VITAL OMISSION.

This omission has always been a very grave blot upon the English Act.

In the Amending Bills introduced into the House of Lords in 1910 by Lord Presidents of the Council, first Viscount Wolverhampton and then Earl Beauchamp, steps were taken to rectify it. Both Bills proposed that two certified midwives should be appointed on to the Central Midwives' Board—one by the Incorporated Midwives' Institute, and one by the Royal British Nurses' Association. During the passage of Earl Beauchamp's Bill through the House of Lords, the representation of the Midwives' Institute was increased by the addition of a medical representative, and that of the R.B.N.A. was (by a majority of six) altered to give it the option of appointing a representative

other than a certified midwife—though Lord Beauchamp opposed the amendment on the ground that out of a Board of fourteen appointed to deal with midwives, it was not unreasonable that two of the members should be midwives. Before the Bill passed into law, the House of Commons of 1910 was dissolved.

The Central Midwives' Board for Scotland consists of eleven persons. Three of these are appointed by the Lord President of the Council and two of the three must be certified midwives.

The Central Midwives' Board for Ireland consists of eleven persons, four of whom are midwives.

The Central Midwives' Board for England consists of nine persons, none of whom need be midwives.

Why should not the Amending Bill provide for the addition of two certified midwives to the Board? The grievance of English midwives will be accentuated if a Bill of which the declared purpose is to bring it into line with those in other parts of the United Kingdom fails to do so in this vital particular. It is a point which midwives should not allow to be lost sight of in the House of Commons, and should urge upon their local Members of Parliament—and especially upon Labour Members.

An Amendment was adopted on July 2nd to section five of the principal Act. This section provides that the Central Midwives Board shall, as soon as practicable after December 31st in each year, publish a financial statement, and submit a copy to the Privy Council. If there is any balance against the Board, and the balance is approved by the Privy Council, the Board may apportion such balance between the councils of the several counties and county boroughs *in proportion to the number of midwives who have given notice during the year of their intention to practise in those areas respectively*, and may recover from the councils the sum so apportioned.

The amendment provides that the apportionment of such balance shall be *in proportion to the population of those counties and county boroughs*, according to the returns of the last published census for the time being. This is obviously an improvement, and a more just arrangement. If the basis of apportionment is the number of practising midwives, then the more active a county or county borough is in inducing midwives to practise, the larger the amount of the subsidy which can be recovered by the Central Midwives' Board, while a slack authority gets off lightly.

Section 3 makes the following necessary addition to section 7 of the principal Act:—

"A certificate purporting to be signed by the Secretary of the Board that the name of a woman whose name appears in the roll of mid-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)