

The Midwife.

A WHITE PAPER ISSUED BY THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD.

PROPOSED DISFRANCHISEMENT OF THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

The amended Midwives' Act gives discretion to the Central Midwives' Board to add representatives, and also to deprive organisations of representation if approved by the Ministry of Health. Acting under these powers a White Paper recently issued contains representations made to the Ministry of Health by the Central Midwives' Board with regard to the constitution of that body and proposed its number should be increased from nine to twelve. Comparing the suggested with the existing representation the alterations are as follows:—

(a) The Ministry of Health to appoint three persons "of whom one shall be a certified midwife," instead of two persons, "one of whom shall be a woman."

(b) The Incorporated Midwives' Institute to appoint a certified midwife as well as a registered medical practitioner as at present.

(c) The Association of Municipal Corporations to appoint one member (new member).

(d) The Society of Medical Officers of Health to appoint one member (new member).

(e) The representation of the Royal British Nurses' Association to cease.

Thus the principle of the representation of thoroughly trained Nurse Midwives is to be swept away—whilst every other interest is provided for—especially groups which employ midwives.

SUGGESTED NEW CONSTITUTION.

Number of Representatives.

Three persons appointed by the said President of the Council (Minister of Health) of whom one shall be a certified midwife on the English Midwives' Roll, preferably one who is, or has been an inspector of midwives, appointed by a Local Supervising Authority.

Four registered medical practitioners, one appointed by the Royal College of Physicians, one by the Royal College of Surgeons, one by the Society of Apothecaries, and one by the Incorporated Midwives' Institute.

One certified midwife appointed by the Incorporated Midwives' Institute.

One person by the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute.

One person by the Association of County Councils.

One person by the Association of Municipal Corporations.

One person by the Society of Medical Officers of Health.

By the new constitution of the Board, mid-

wives must be appointed on it for the first time. This is good, but in these democratic times direct representation of midwives should be provided for—and the certified midwives have power to elect certain members of their own profession to represent them on their Governing Body.

A REACTIONARY PROPOSITION.

But what of the reactionary proposal to disfranchise the highly qualified and efficient Nurse-Midwife—until now represented through the Royal British Nurses' Association? This is a step backward indeed, and will naturally discourage still further the practice of midwifery by women holding the dual qualifications of nursing and midwifery certificates. It seems almost incredible that the members of the Central Midwives' Board should not realise the suicidal policy of this retrograde proposition.

We hope the Royal British Nurses' Association will draw the attention of the Minister of Health to the following facts:—

(a) That it is for the public benefit that trained nursing should be represented on the Central Midwives' Board, because certified midwives do not only deliver the lying-in woman, but nurse her for ten days after confinement.

(b) That it is desirable that Matrons of Maternity Hospitals and Sisters-in-Charge of Maternity Wards in hospitals and infirmaries, and others practising as private maternity-nurses, and those holding public health appointments, should be thoroughly trained and add midwifery to their nursing qualifications.

(c) It may be argued that there are not many members of the Royal British Nurses' Association who work as "practising midwives," *i.e.*, certified midwives practising in the homes of the poor in rural districts, but that is a reason for improving the conditions of contract and service of such midwives of the high standard and dual qualifications, possessed by all certified midwives who are members of the Royal British Nurses' Association and kindred societies of trained nurses.

(d) Under the Ministry of Health there will be scope for the service of large numbers of highly qualified women, and it is important to encourage trained nurses to qualify as midwives, instead of discouraging them by depriving them of representation on the Central Midwives' Board.

We hope Matrons of Maternity Hospitals and Sisters of Maternity wards will petition against the disfranchisement of the certificated Nurse-Midwife.

NURSING AND EXPECTANT MOTHERS.

At a recent meeting of the Privy Council held at Balmoral, powers in reference to the treatment of nursing mothers and expectant mothers were transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Health.

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