

(Cantab.), was appointed Secretary of the Board as from September 6th next, at a salary of £600 per annum, with annual increments of £20 up to £800 per annum, the salary to be deemed to include any War Bonus awarded up to this date.

MATERNITY BENEFIT.

A TEST CASE.

A test case of considerable importance under the National Insurance Act was decided in the Divisional Court on July 25th before the Lord Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Darling, and Mr. Justice Bray, when, by a majority decision the Court came to the conclusion that maternity benefit was payable in the case of the confinement of a married woman by reason of the fact that her husband was an insured person, irrespective of the paternity of the child.

The case was stated by the Insurance Commissioners to whom a married woman had appealed against the decision of the Northumberland and Miners' Permanent Relief Fund Friendly and Approved Society, that she was not entitled to the benefit because her child was illegitimate.

The Ministry of Health was represented by the Attorney-General and the Society by Mr. Comyns Carr.

The dissentient judge was Mr. Justice Darling, his reasons being that the insured person was a man who went away as a soldier, and during his absence his wife bore a child of which he was not the father. It was said that the man's contributions to the Society, and those of his fellow members, should be applied to provide maternity benefit for the child of a woman who was not herself insured, and of a man who was not insured. That meant the husband's money would be used to provide comforts for an unfaithful wife and for the child of another man. His Lordship saw nothing in the Act which compelled him to agree to this.

Mr. Justice Bray considered if the ordinary grammatical sense of the words of the Act, were adopted by the Court it must approve of the payment of the benefit, and this view was endorsed by the Lord Chief Justice, who held that the maternity benefit was intended for the woman and child and not for the husband, except in the sense that it was an advantage to him that his wife should be properly treated. Doubtless, it was intended by the legislature primarily that the benefit should be paid in respect of a child born of the marriage, but the language of the Act was wide, and covered the case of the wife of an insured person without limitation. He could not add words of limitation, and had come to the conclusion that the only safe course was to read the words in their proper grammatical meaning. His lordship, therefore, decided that the maternity

benefit was payable if the husband of a married woman was an insured person irrespective of the paternity of the child.

We consider this judgment sound. The province of the Court is not to sit as a Court of Morals, but as a Court of Law, and to administer the law as it stands.

If the paternity of a child must be legally proved before the mother is entitled to maternity benefit, the administration of the Act will be greatly complicated.

POST CERTIFICATE SCHOOL FOR MIDWIVES.

The General Lying-in Hospital, York Road, Lambeth, is opening in October a school intended chiefly to benefit midwives practising in country districts, and who may not have opportunities of keeping in touch with modern teaching and methods; midwives who took their training years ago will also find it valuable to enable them to rub up their midwifery, and newly qualified midwives who need "some half-way house between studentship and independent practice" will have the opportunity to gain further experience, and confidence in the work. The hospital has taken over the midwifery centre at 77, Southampton Street, Camberwell, S.E.; from six to eight hundred patients are attended yearly, so every facility will be available for practical work. In addition to this students will have opportunities to see abnormal pregnancies and labours in the hospital, attend special hospitals for eye and venereal disease, and gain experience of work at infant welfare centres.

The Sister-in-Charge will conduct classes, teach modern methods of booking, ante-natal visiting, note taking, and co-operation with other social agencies. A sister-tutor at the Hospital will give demonstrations on the preparations of artificial foods, preparations for small operations, and nursing of abnormal cases, &c. The students will attend the Physician's lectures, and bed-side clinics, and any other outside lectures likely to be useful to them.

The syllabus and application form may be had from the Sister-in-Charge; the length of the term is two months, but arrangements may be made for a course of one month, if two applicants agree to take one month each. The fees for board, lodging and instruction are 16 guineas. It is hoped that many midwives will avail themselves of this opportunity to improve their knowledge. If they are debarred owing to the expense, an appeal to the local supervising authority might be effective in securing a governmental grant. The General Lying-in Hospital has a well-deserved reputation as a teaching school, and was one of the first to throw open its doors to all midwives, desirous of post-certificate teaching. We warmly wish this extension of the good work of the hospital in improving the midwifery service of the country, the success it deserves.

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