

The Midwife.

LONDON FEDERATION OF INFANT WELFARE CENTRES.

A deputation from the London Federation of Infant Welfare Centres, 92, Fleet Street, E.C.4, was recently received by the Minister of Health when the results of a preliminary survey of Centres in London were discussed.

SIR HENRY HARRIS, M.P., who introduced the deputation, said that London had special problems of its own. He urged that the voluntary centres should be encouraged to continue their work as part of properly co-ordinated borough schemes.

MRS. WALEY JOSEPH said that there were three ways in which the municipalities had given help to voluntary centres:—(1) by taking over the Centres; (2) by giving help in kind—allowing the use of premises; or (3) by repaying the centres for work done. The third way was likely to be the most successful; the second often leading to friction.

The fear of losing the personal touch had been expressed by the mothers, the workers and the midwives. The success of the centres depended upon the confidence which the mother reposed in those that carry on the work. She thought that if the centres could receive adequate assistance in the way of grants, the work could be developed in many ways, and the centres would be enabled to employ a sufficient number of highly skilled health visitors.

DR. H. H. MILLS considered that the Health Visitor should visit as her chief function, and pay special attention to the mothers who do not come to consultations.

DR. ADDISON replying to various points raised said that he recognised, as indicated in the past, the essential nature and great value of the work of the voluntary centres.

As regards the specific questions which Sir Henry Harris asked, he believed that the centres now got their grants directly, and so long as the present organisations of the local health agencies continued, he did not intend to interfere with the practice.

Another question put forward must be carefully scrutinised. It was suggested that, when the borough councils submitted proposals to the Ministry, before it took any action in the matter, it should consult the voluntary and other agencies interested. He hesitated to commit himself to any promise on that point. But in the controlling and directing of child welfare centres, it would be in everybody's interests to keep in as friendly touch as possible. He did not propose to place any obstacle in the way of direct communication.

With regard to Mrs. Waley Joseph's point, he would see what could be done in the matter of advancing the payment of grants; whether something could be arranged in the way of making payments on account.

As regards the need for co-ordination, there was, as they said, no central guiding authority in London with power to deal with it. That was the centre of all their difficulties. If there had been such a body, it would have been a great advantage. At the present stage, he was anxious not to prejudice the future by setting up any fresh temporary or emergency arrangements; but he was considering in detail proposals for the improvement of the health services of the country generally. That was why he seized upon Sir Henry Harris' phrase "the absence of any guiding authority." He hoped that, before long, it would be possible to introduce measures for securing a properly directed and co-ordinated health administration. He would seek to make the best use of voluntary health agencies and give them sufficient freedom in their pioneer work. In various directions, they had broken fresh ground. It would be a great pity to lose that valuable assistance, and they might be quite sure that he should not do so.

EXTRA SUGAR FOR ARTIFICIALLY FED CHILDREN.

The Ministry of Health have arranged with the sugar distribution branch of the Ministry of Food that, with certain modifications, the extra supply of sugar authorised for artificially fed children who are regular attendants at Child Welfare Centres shall be continued. To be eligible for this extra ration a certificate must be produced from the medical officer or superintendent of the centre declaring that the child is between 6 and 18 months of age, that it needs an additional supply and is not attending an institution where such a supply might be obtained.

THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD FOR IRELAND.

The Midwives Act for Ireland will now shortly come into full effect, and, after February 7th, 1920, —when the term of grace expires for midwives to claim admission to the Midwives Roll on the ground of holding certificates from recognised maternity hospitals, or of having been in bona-fide practice on the passing of the Act—all candidates for enrolment will be required to pass the examination of the Central Midwives Board for Ireland.

At a recent meeting of the Board arrangements were discussed for examinations to be held in Dublin, Belfast, and Cork in June next. Thus the three Acts will come into line, as in England and Wales, and Scotland, admission to the Rolls is already dependent on passing a one-portal examination under each of these authorities.

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