

In *Clause 3* the promoters of the Bill provide for the same power to be given to the Central Midwives Board as is possessed by the General Nursing Council, of charging a fee not exceeding 2s. 6d. "in respect of the retention in any year of the name of any person on the Roll of Midwives," and for the removal of the name of any person who has failed to pay such fee. It should be noted, however, that there is no provision for the restoration of a name removed from the Roll for this cause, on payment of the prescribed fee, and it is important that an amendment to this effect should be made.

Trained nurses should note that this provision will affect themselves. There were, at the end of March, 1925, the last available figures published, the names of 59,791 women on the Midwives Roll, of whom 51,739 were trained midwives. Only 15,882 notified their intention to practice in 1924, and, presumably, the majority of the other 35,857 are trained nurses who have taken midwifery training as a natural sequence to training in medical and surgical nursing.

Clause 4 is as follows:—

"The Midwives Acts, 1902 and 1918, and this Act shall apply to a midwife who is a male as they apply to a midwife who is a female, and accordingly words in the Midwives Acts, 1902 and 1918, importing the female gender shall, so far as necessary to give effect to the foregoing provision, include males."

This appears an unnecessary provision, because the term "midwife" means a woman certified under the Midwives Act, 1902, and since 1905 no woman may use the name Midwife, under penalty, in England and Wales, unless her name is on the Roll of Midwives. Apparently, therefore, if carried, a new order of practitioners of midwifery could be established who are neither medical practitioners nor midwives—a proposition which, we hope, the medical profession as well as certified midwives will resolutely oppose. The practice of Midwifery should be restricted to registered medical practitioners, and certified midwives.

To summarise the four clauses of Part I of the Bill, therefore, we find:—

1. That the amendment proposed by the Central Midwives Board is preferable to *Clause 1*.
2. That *Clause 2* is limited to making provision to compensate a suspended midwife compulsory instead of permissive, and to setting a limit to the time in which a medical practitioner called in to assist a midwife can claim his fee.
3. *Clause 3* provides for the insurance of pregnant women against liability for medical fees which is totally irrelevant in a Midwives' Act; and
4. *Clause 4*, makes possible the creation of a class of male midwives—an unnecessary provision which we believe will be repugnant to most women.

PART II.

We have already expressed the opinion that Part II should be deleted from this Bill, but we draw special attention to *Clause 8*, which provides that a Local Supervising Authority may make bye-laws with respect to records to be kept of patients received into, and children born in, a maternity home and generally with respect to the conduct of Maternity Homes for carrying into effect this part of the Act.

This detailed supervision of professional work by an unprofessional authority is very undesirable. Professional records in regard to patients are confidential and should be kept as such. Medical practitioners would not tolerate such an inquisition, and in Part III of the Bill we find that "any hospital or other premises for the conduct of which a duly qualified medical practitioner resident therein is responsible, is exempt from the provisions of the Act."

The privacy of the patient should in all cases be respected.

AN AMENDMENT OF THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD.

In a letter to *The Times* published on March 23rd, Sir Francis Champneys, Bart., Chairman of the Central Midwives' Board, commenting upon the Bill, writes:—

"Hitherto the practice of midwifery by unqualified women, in some districts has been found very difficult to stop owing to the Midwives Act of 1902 permitting an unqualified woman to attend women in childbirth under the direction of a doctor. In many cases, owing to the difficulty of construing the meaning of the word 'direction,' the relationship of the doctor to the patient has been extremely shadowy, and, in fact, the unqualified woman has acted as a midwife.

"The present Bill proposes to make the unqualified person act under the 'personal supervision' of a doctor if she is to escape prosecution, but the term 'personal supervision' (doubtless inserted in the Bill with the best intentions), in the Board's opinion—an opinion endorsed at a recent conference of representatives of all the county councils and county boroughs of England and Wales—still leaves open a way of escape. At the Board's request Colonel Fremantle has put down an amendment providing that (except in the case of emergency) no unqualified person shall attend a woman in childbirth except under the direction and in the presence of a doctor. If this amendment is carried, the Board feels sure that the unqualified practice of midwifery which has been so harmful in the past to many a mother and child will be suppressed."

THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD.

The List of Successful Candidates at the February Examination of the Central Midwives Board now published shows that 722 candidates were examined and 574 passed the examination. The percentage of failure was 20.5.

LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION.

At the Annual Meeting of the Leicester and Leicestershire Midwives' Association, of which Miss E. Pell Smith, S.R.N., is President, held in Leicester on March 10th, the satisfactory and interesting Report presented stated that the Association continues to make steady progress and gain new members. The meetings have been much better attended, and the lectures given have been most interesting and instructive.

Mrs. Warner, in an interesting speech, dealt with a woman's influence, and paid a heartfelt tribute to the numberless women, who go through their lives unhonoured and unsung, but who, nevertheless, are heroines—the good mothers in crowded homes, who bring up large families. Such a life, she said, meant a never-ending struggle, and it was to such women that the midwife, with her scientific knowledge, and instructions in pre-natal care, was of inestimable value.

LECTURES AT THE INFANTS' HOSPITAL.

A Course of Lectures to Nurses, Health Visitors and others, will be held at the Infants' Hospital, Vincent Square, Westminster, S.W.1., from April 14th to June 16th, inclusive.

The Course is open to Nurses, Health Visitors and other persons interested in Maternity and Welfare or in the care of Infants.

Tickets for the Course, 5s., are obtainable from the Secretary of the Hospital. Single Lecture, 1s.

The Lectures are delivered on Wednesdays, and commence at 6.30 p.m.

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