

The Midwife.

THE REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON THE TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT OF MIDWIVES.

The Central Midwives Board has issued an exhaustive Memorandum on the Report of the Departmental Committee on the Training and Employment of Midwives, and simultaneously, the Observations of the Board on the Recommendations of this Departmental Committee, set out in parallel columns with the Recommendations. The price of each is 6d., or 7½d., post free, and they may be obtained from Messrs. Spottiswoode, Ballantyne and Co., Ltd., 1, New Street Square, London, E.C.

THE MEMORANDUM.

The Central Midwives Board states that the Report of the Departmental Committee suggests a decrease of the responsibilities of the Central Midwives Board, and also a diminution in the number of members of the Board. In accordance with the powers conferred on the Board by the Midwives Act of 1918, the present constitution was established in 1921, and after many years' experience of practical working, has been found to answer very well. All bodies specially interested in the education and the work of midwives are represented, and any diminution in numbers could only result in under representation or non-representation of interests which are properly concerned.

A point which calls for emphasis at the outset is that the irregular character of the maternity service all over the country is due to the fact that, although Local Authorities have plenty of *powers*, they have few statutory *duties*, and that adequate pressure upon backward Authorities has never been exercised in order to compel them to fulfil their public responsibilities.

Most, if not all, of the services outlined in the earlier part of the recommendations contained in the Report of the Departmental Committee are within the existing powers of Local Authorities, and could have been in operation long ago if proper pressure had been brought to bear. It has long been obvious to the Central Midwives Board that only by imposing as an obligation upon Local Authorities the duty of providing adequate medical, midwifery and nursing care, forming a complete maternity service, would a satisfactory solution be reached, and the Board welcomes the pronouncement of the Departmental Committee on these points. It must be remembered that the Board itself has no powers in this respect.

A Comprehensive Maternity Scheme.

The first essential is the establishment in every area of a comprehensive maternity scheme, which will make complete provision for:—

- (a) Medical examinations during ante-natal period.
- (b) The full services of a certified midwife, or, alternatively, a doctor, and a midwife acting as a maternity nurse.
- (c) The services of a doctor when required.
- (d) The services of a specialist on the doctor's request.
- (e) Institutional provision for the confinement of abnormal cases, patients with unsuitable home conditions, and also for those who desire such arrangements.
- (f) Further medical examination six weeks after the confinement.

In the opinion of the Central Midwives Board these provisions should be made without further delay.

The Central Midwives Board has not limited its efforts towards improvement to a mere extension of the length of training required, but has also substantially extended its scope. Greater requirements in practical midwifery, keeping of records, ante-natal supervision, and after-care of mothers and infants have all been introduced in order to give the pupil a wide outlook on the preservation of the health of the mothers and the avoidance of foreseeable complications.

Undoubtedly it would appear that further prolongation of training in midwifery is inopportune and that the next step should be the restriction of entry to those who hold the general nursing qualification. This will become possible as soon as the practice of midwifery is made sufficiently attractive to the trained nurse midwife. In the meantime piecemeal legislation for a class of entrant soon to become obsolete should be avoided.

In regard to the vexed question of the centralization of lectures, the Central Midwives Board say the Departmental Committee, in expressing their opinions as to the methods of training of midwives evidently lost sight of the fact that the midwife in training is a *student*, and not merely a means of providing cheap labour for lying-in institutions. Notwithstanding the inconvenience (if any) to institutions, the Report of the Departmental Committee states that lectures on certain subsidiary subjects, may very properly be centralized. The Central Midwives Board sees no reason why lectures on midwifery should be excepted.

The Central Midwives Board objects in the strongest possible manner to those recommendations of the Departmental Committee which suggest the transfer of the duty of approval and inspection of training institutions and teachers from the Board to the Ministry of Health. It has read the reservations in the Committee's Report (signed by Dr. J. S. Fairbairn and Mrs. Bruce Richmond) which deal with these recommendations and entirely endorses them.

We advise all midwives to procure and study these expert and very important documents.

At the meeting of the Central Midwives Board, on December 5th, held at the Board Room, 1, Queen Anne's Gate Buildings, Westminster, a letter was received from the Ministry of Health, stating that the Minister of Health approves the existing Rules of the Board for a period of one year from December 31st next.

THE BABIES' FESTIVAL.

Christmas is above all the babies' festival. They stretch out appealing hands to us asking for our help, and it is a time when the Maternity and Children's Hospitals should enlist our sympathies.

Just now a hospital which peculiarly needs assistance is Queen Charlotte's Hospital. At present in the Marylebone Road, but launching out with a big new scheme at Hammersmith, Queen Charlotte's Hospital is one of the oldest and best known of our Maternity Hospitals, and both as a training school for Midwives and Maternity Nurses, and as an institution of the greatest benefit to mothers and babes deserves the help of those who can afford to give liberally. Subscriptions and donations should be sent to the Secretary.

LAST WORDS FOR 1929.

"Plough deep, while sluggards sleep,
And you shall have corn to sell or keep."