

# The Midwife.

## A SALARIED MIDWIVES SERVICE.

On the recommendation of the Hospitals and Medical Services Committee of the London County Council, the Council at its meeting on July 23rd agreed:

(a) That the Council supports the recommendation of the Joint Council of Midwifery that a salaried midwives service should be established in all areas under the appropriate local authority.

(b) That the Council is not in agreement with the proposals of the Joint Council of Midwifery regarding the payment of compensation to certain classes of practising midwives and the payment of pensions in certain circumstances.

Dr. Somerville Hastings, chairman of the committee, presenting its report, said that there was a great deal that was good in the report of the Joint Council. The Committee was entirely in agreement with the recommendation that every maternity case should be attended by a properly qualified midwife, acting either alone or under a doctor, and also that there should be a municipal, salaried, whole time midwives service in all areas not already adequately served by salaried midwives.

The majority of the Committee, however, disagreed with the proposal of the Joint Council to compensate inefficient midwives in order that they might be "bought out."

## A MATTER OF REAL NATIONAL CONCERN.

Sir Kingsley Wood, Minister of Health, receiving recently a deputation on the subject of maternal mortality and morbidity from the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations, introduced by Miss Loughlin, said that the failure of the maternal mortality to fall was a matter of real national concern. The problem was a complex one, not capable of any single solution. It required constant attention, research and patience. Sight must not be lost of the fact that much was already being done. Thus comparing 1931 with 1934, there had been a steady increase in the provision of maternity services made directly and indirectly by local authorities in England and Wales.

The Minister further said that post-natal clinics were increasing in number, and that a number of local authorities had already made arrangements for the post-natal examination of patients. When the results of the present intensive investigation into maternal mortality had been received, it would be possible to decide the next steps to be taken in connection with maternal morbidity.

## MATERNAL MORTALITY.

At the Annual Representative Meeting of the British Medical Association Dr. A. K. Gibson, of Kensington, moved a resolution:—

"That in view of the serious diminution of the opportunities for midwifery in general practice, the Council be asked to consider the whole matter and to report upon it at the earliest opportunity."

In moving the resolution, which was carried, Dr. Gibson pointed out that a large number of patients were being absorbed by hospitals, and doctors were being forced to lower their fees in order to compete with the hospitals in a manner resembling Dutch auction. It was not in the interests of the patients or of the profession.

Professor R. M. F. Picken, Chairman of the Public Health Committee, in moving a section of the Annual Report said that the British Medical Association had always devoted much attention to the problem of maternal

mortality. It had prepared a memorandum on a national maternity service in 1929, and later carried out an investigation into the causes of maternal mortality.

In the Association's scheme for a national maternity service the essential feature was continuity of medical treatment by the family doctor. The report of the Joint Committee on midwifery revolved round the belief that there was no satisfactory alternative to the introduction of a municipal salaried whole-time midwives service in all areas not already adequately served by salaried midwives. The British Medical Association was appointing a sub-committee to consider afresh its national maternity scheme with special reference to the points raised by the Joint Council on Midwifery.

Dr. A. Baldie (Kensington) thought that the Association should be active in combating the various propaganda campaigns by political and other bodies which, either directly or obliquely, were based upon the assumed inefficiency of the average doctor, who was not incompetent to practise midwifery. A confinement was a normal physiological process and not a disease. The specialists should link up with the general practitioners and formulate a scheme so that they would not be faced by the State with a *fait accompli* of a midwifery service run and administered by laymen.

The subject of maternal mortality is at present constantly before the public, both in Parliament, in the press, and in public meetings, with the result that child-bearing mothers are becoming seriously alarmed, and, not before time, the British Medical Association has uttered a necessary warning against the terrifying publicity which is a contributory cause to such mortality.

At the above meeting of the British Medical Association, on the motion of Dr. H. Guy Dain (Birmingham), Chairman of the Insurance Acts Committee of the Association, the following resolution was also passed:—

"The British Medical Association regrets that the question of maternal mortality has become the subject of widespread political discussion, receiving great publicity.

"Maternal mortality is a scientific and administrative problem, which deserves careful and scientific study, but in the experience of practising doctors the publicity which it is receiving to-day is tending to terrify child-bearing women, and is, in itself, a cause of increased mortality."

In moving the resolution, Dr. Dain said it was time that they expressed disapproval of the problem having come into the political arena, and as an illustration of the harm which may be caused by the publicity at present given to the subject of maternal mortality, instanced the case of a young woman in his area who was about to have a baby and was extremely frightened. She died later for no reason that gynaecologists could discover other than that she was an example of "obstetric shock."

Dr. A. Baldie, of Kensington, said that the average doctor had been forced to drop midwifery through lack of opportunity, but was quite capable of it. They should combat the propaganda campaign of political and other bodies whose attack was based on the assumed inefficiency of the average doctor.

## QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

The Annual Report of the Midwifery Training School of Queen Charlotte's Maternity Hospital states that the numbers of Midwives and Students who entered for training again show an increase, and are higher than at any time since the period of training was extended in 1926.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)