

provided a whole-time paid service and that was a great advance. Then it improved the pay of the midwife and improved her status. It gave her a different position in the medical world. Concluding, Major Hills asked the Minister whether he would try to induce the Central Midwives Board (who were not under him) to increase the period of training of midwives to two years. If that could be done we could get a splendid service.

The Example of Working-class Mothers.

Mr. A. Holland (Derby, Claycross) in a maiden speech, said that he had listened with great interest to the Minister, but he felt that his speech was of better quality than his Bill. He expressed "great resentment against the patronising attentions of the more favoured sections of the community who were, he said, in his view, much too fond of lecturing the poor, and telling them what they should or should not do, in the circumstances with which the House was now dealing. He submitted to the House that given the facilities which should be their common right—a sufficiency of food, a decent dwelling-house, the necessary skilled attention in time of sickness—the working classes would be quite capable of managing their own affairs, and in the majority of cases would, indeed, be examples of motherhood to many who now tried to teach them."

The Real Problem.

Sir Francis Fremantle (St. Albans) said that the main matter of the Bill was the question of midwifery as a profession. He did not think this had been sufficiently appreciated. The real object was to establish and enlarge and improve, both in quantity and quality, the profession of midwives. The number of midwives was going to be cut down probably by one half, and that half was going to be much more hardly treated from a professional point of view, and higher requirements would be demanded of it. All the speeches had taken it for granted—the Minister himself took it for granted—that the flow of recruits would come in, but was that the case? That was the real problem before them.

What were the inducements to young girls of good education and standing, choosing a profession for themselves, to take up the great burden of training to go in for this extraordinarily hard and arduous life with all its difficulties? It was only natural that they should prefer to go in for general nursing. The conditions of service laid down in the Bill, though better than they had been hitherto, were to his mind quite inadequate to bring in the right kind of persons, to reward them and, when they had experience of it to recommend others amongst their acquaintance to come into the profession. They should examine the Bill from that point of view.

Salaries and Superannuation.

Miss Wilkinson (Durham, Yarrow) pleaded for a generous view in connection with salaries, and said: "We pay a tribute to what the voluntary organisations have done towards getting things started. I think that the importance of the voluntary organisations is the pioneer work they do, and the value they have in rousing public opinion on matters where public opinion is only too anxious to sleep. It is the voluntary work of women who had to face much greater difficulties than any woman has to face to-day which has forced these things on public attention, and would not have a conspiracy of silence on the sufferings which were going on. But there comes a time when the work of voluntary associations is almost done, and what has to take their place is a well-equipped, well-organised and well-endowed public institution. I hope that the voluntary associations will not be allowed to pull down the level of salaries and superannuation."

Mrs. Tate (Frome) said: "I much deplore the tremendous play which hon. Members opposite have tried to make to-day with regard to the amount of money that is to be spent on the midwifery service as compared with the amount of money that is to be spent on armaments. They glibly talk of money being spent on weapons of destruction, but has it never yet dawned on their politically warped minds that the money which we are spending on armaments is spent to save life just as much as the money which we are spending on maternity services? If they were in power, with their incredible policy of rushing to war with no arms, there would not be very much life left in this country to save, and there would be no need for a Midwives Bill to-day, because women and children would be slaughtered in their thousands. It is a lamentable thing, when hon. Members opposite take a genuine interest in this terrible problem of maternal mortality, and when they can find so little fault with the Government's Bill, that the only thing they can do is to try to make propaganda about the money spent on armaments as compared with the money spent on maternity services. It is nonsense."

After more interesting speeches had been made the Debate was wound up by Mr. Shakespeare, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health, after which the Bill was read a second time, and committed to a Standing Committee.

The full official report on the Second Reading of the Bill on which our Report is based will be found in the Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons of April 30th, obtainable through any bookseller, price 6d. net.

DEPUTATION TO THE MINISTER OF HEALTH.

Sir Kingsley Wood, the Minister of Health, recently received a deputation from the Midwives Institute. The deputation was introduced by Miss E. M. Pye, the President of the Institute, and there were present:—

Mrs. Mitchell, Deputy Chairman of the Council.

Mrs. Frankenberg, Member of Council (for Manchester).

Miss Carter, Organising Secretary.

The deputation brought to the Minister's notice a number of detailed points arising on the Midwives Bill, of which a Second Reading was to be taken shortly in the House of Commons.

The Minister undertook to give careful consideration to the points raised before the Second Reading Debate which took place as recorded above on April 30th.

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

Until the passing of the Local Government Act, 1929, approved voluntary associations providing maternity and child welfare services received Exchequer grants direct from the Minister of Health. Since the Act they have ceased to receive grants from the Minister, but in place of them they receive annual contributions from the county or county borough council in whose area or for whose benefit they work. The contributions are settled by a scheme drawn up, except in London, by the council and approved, with or without modification, by the Minister; the scheme for London is settled by the Minister direct.

Under section 101 of the Act of 1929 a scheme of this kind must be prepared and submitted to the Minister six months at least before the beginning of each "fixed grant period" under the Act. The next grant begins on April 1st, 1937.

The Minister has accordingly issued a circular (Circular 1538) to county and county borough councils outside London reminding them that they must prepare a further scheme to secure the payment of annual contributions for the five years beginning on April 1st next towards the expenses of voluntary associations providing maternity and child welfare services in or for the benefit of their area.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)