

over—someone to share the night calls and to carry on routine work. When the salaried midwifery service is established I hope it will be possible to provide a certain number of districts with Community Homes. These might at least form the nucleus of the training centres, not only for pupils, but for Teaching Sisters and Inspectors. They would, I am convinced, attract the best type of woman. The idea is not new, it is in practice in the Homes connected with the Queen's Institute of District Nursing, and even in rural districts the tendency is to put two midwives together in a district so that they can rely on each other for assistance and relief, and for the happiness of shared interests. It would do much also to establish a reasonable standard of comfort, as the expenses of a well-equipped house with adequate facilities for heating, plentiful hot water, sterilising plant and domestic service would be shared.

Now, while the Service is changing, the opportunity to experiment a little is given to us. It is to be hoped that clear thought and healthy discussion may prepare the way for the development of a Service which will justify all the hopes of those working for it.

## THE MIDWIVES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The event of the greatest importance to Midwives and to Registered Nurses at the present time is the passage through Parliament of the Midwives Acts Amendment Bill now in Committee in the House of Commons. We have dealt with this at length in our Editorial article on pages 141 and 142, and we ask our readers to study this carefully.

### The Bill in Committee.

The Bill is to be further considered in Committee on Thursday, June 11th, therefore there is time for Midwives and Nurses to bring to the notice of their Members of Parliament any representations concerning its provisions they desire to make.

### Points to Note.

(1) The Bill aims to provide a whole-time domiciliary Service of State Certified Midwives throughout England and Wales. It places an obligation upon each local supervising authority to secure an adequate Service within its area, and provides for an Exchequer grant towards the cost of the new Service.

As Midwifery will not in all instances occupy the entire time of these whole-time employees of the local supervising authorities, but at the discretion of the authorities they may be employed in other duties such as Nursing and Health Visiting, it is essential in the interests of the sick poor and of the standard of Nursing Education defined under State authority for a provision to be introduced into the Bill that unless a woman is to be employed solely in midwifery work she must hold the qualification of State Registered Nurse as well as State Certified Midwife. Otherwise, while the Act will protect the poor in regard to the services of efficient midwives it will leave them unprotected as to the efficiency of the services of the nurses placed officially at their disposal. These unstandardised nurses, moreover will, as whole time employees, inevitably be partially subsidised out of moneys provided by Parliament.

### Utilisation of Voluntary Nursing Associations.

During the Committee Stage of the Bill it has been evident that there is a strong cleavage of opinion as to the desirability of the employment of midwives supplied by

voluntary nursing organisations to the local supervising authorities; some members taking the view that an entirely new midwifery service should be established through these authorities, and others that the experience gained by the voluntary organisations should be utilised.

The Minister of Health when introducing the Bill expressed the view that "co-operation with the doctors and with voluntary hospitals and agencies is essential to the success of this proposal."

The opinions of some of the opponents may be briefly quoted as follows:

Mr. Rhys Davies: "I cannot conceive, however well-meaning may be the most bountiful ladies of the land who are running these voluntary organisations, that they can ever provide as efficient and modern a midwifery service as a local authority can."

Miss Ellen Wilkinson: "Voluntary organisations would pull down standards. There is no doubt that a great deal of busyboding enters into them, and it is therefore hotly resented by working-class mothers. In my own constituency, and even more so in my previous constituency, I have come up against cases where women very hotly resented certain types of ladies lecturing them about the number of babies they ought to have. That kind of thing on a charitable basis does produce a great deal of ill-feeling and resentment."

Mr. Batey: "We do not believe that the voluntary organisations, with all respect to them, ought to have such power as to put them in an equal position with local authorities."

Miss Eleanor Rathbone urged that the scale of salaries should be regulated, otherwise "those who have taken the responsibility of giving an extended lease of life to voluntary associations in this country must realise that there are dangers in a profession that has always been underpaid of the under-payment continuing."

Mr. Lunn said further: "We feel it to be a vital principle that as public money is to be used, and as we want an efficient service, those who are to carry out that service should be well paid and should have good conditions of employment."

These conditions must necessarily affect voluntary nursing organisations which agree to provide the local supervising authorities with midwifery service.

The principal conditions apparently considered by the Committee suitable provision for midwives under the Act are: (1) The salary of a health visitor—usually £200 a year or over. (2) Adequate transport. (3) The provision of sterilised outfits and dressings for maternity cases. (4) Annual holidays.

So far midwives, despite their heavy responsibilities, have not been remunerated on anything like this scale by voluntary organisations, and these organisations even with a share of the Exchequer grant may find some difficulty in finding the money required.

### A SCOTTISH BILL TO BE INTRODUCED.

In the House of Commons on May 6th, Mr. Mathers asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, in view of the introduction of the Midwives Bill for England and Wales, whether it was his intention to promote legislation for the purpose of reducing the maternal mortality-rate in Scotland; and, if so, when.—Colonel Colville, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, replied: Yes, Sir. My right hon. friend hopes to be able to make a statement on this subject at an early date.

On May 26th in reply to a further question by Mr. Mathers, Sir Godfrey Collins stated that he hoped it would be possible to secure during the present session, the passage into law of a Scottish Bill dealing with this subject.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)