

The Midwife.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCOTTISH MATERNITY SERVICES.

The King's Speech at the opening of Parliament on November 3rd contained the following announcement:—

"Close attention will continue to be given to the improvement of conditions in Scotland. My Ministers are examining the Report of the Committee on Scottish Health Services and among measures relating to health a Bill for the development of Scottish maternity services will be introduced. Legislation affecting agriculture in Scotland will also be submitted to you."

THE MIDWIVES ACT, 1936.

Sir Kingsley Wood, the Minister of Health, on October 22nd, gave the Opening Address at the Conference on the new Midwives Act, which was held at the Central Hall, Westminster, under the auspices of the Royal Sanitary Institute.

The Minister said it was most essential that the new service should be in general operation not later than July next. It was not a State service in the sense that it was to be operated from Whitehall, but was based upon the machinery and work of the local authorities and the great voluntary organisations. Proposals for the service were to be made not later than January next, and this was a matter he regarded as one of considerable urgency.

There was nothing in the Midwives Act to prevent the employment of married midwives, and he was confident that authorities whose rules would prevent the employment of married women would be prepared to revise them so that when these first appointments were made a midwife who was efficient was not barred because she was a married woman. So far as salaries for the new service were concerned, the work of a midwife was of great importance and responsibility, and the scale of salary should be comparable with those applicable to other professional women, such as health visitors, in the same area. It was also important that adequate travelling allowances should be paid.

This new service was the latest addition to the public health services of the country and should be organised as an integral part of those services. In order to secure the best results, the co-operation and good will of the midwives in each area was essential. It was important that the salaried midwives should work in close association with the antenatal service and the health visitors.

The subsequent discussion was opened by Dr. John Buchan, Medical Officer of Health for Bradford.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

The Central Midwives Board has issued an Advisory Memorandum, dated October, 1936, as to the drugs which may properly be carried and administered by midwives which includes the following clauses:—

4. The Midwife should remember that Rules E 10 (a), (b), and 11 of the Rules of the Central Midwives Board are as follows:—

"10. (a) A midwife must not, except under a grave emergency, undertake operative procedure or any treatment which is outside her province.

"Note.—The question whether in any particular case such procedure or treatment was justified will be judged on the facts and circumstances of the case.

"(b) A midwife must not on her own responsibility use any drug unless, in the course of her obstetric training, whether before or after enrolment, she has been thoroughly instructed in its use and is familiar with its dosage and methods of administration or application.

"Note.—The Board, for example, would regard the giving of pituitary extract before the birth of the placenta, except under a grave emergency, as treatment outside a midwife's province.

"11. Except in the case of a simple aperient a midwife must note in her Register of Cases each occasion on which she administers or applies in any way any drug, stating the name and dose of the drug and the time and cause of its administration or application (Rule 34)."

Special attention is drawn to the fact that—

(1) The giving of pituitary extract before the birth of the placenta, except under grave emergency, is treatment outside a midwife's province.

(2) In the application of Rules E 10 (a) and (b), the Board regards the administration by a midwife, acting as such, of gas and air by Minnitt's or similar apparatus for the purpose of producing analgesia during labour as treatment within her province, provided that (i) she has, either before or after enrolment, received at an institution approved by the Board for the purpose, special instruction in the essentials of obstetric analgesia, and has satisfied the institution that she is thoroughly proficient in the use of the apparatus; (ii) the patient has within one month before her confinement been examined by a registered medical practitioner who has handed to the midwife a certificate in writing that the patient is in a fit condition for gas and air administration; and (iii) one other person, being a State certified midwife, or a State registered nurse, or a senior medical student or a pupil midwife, is present at the time of administration in addition to the midwife in charge of the case.

Administration by a midwife of any other anaesthetic, otherwise than under the personal direction and supervision of a registered medical practitioner, is regarded as treatment outside her province.

RELIEF DURING CHILDBIRTH.

Mrs. Stanley Baldwin, in a letter to *The Times*, writes: "The recent decision of the Central Midwives Board to permit midwives who have received instruction in obstetric analgesia at approved training hospitals to give relief upon their own responsibility to their patients by means of a gas and air apparatus will, I hope, finally dispel the illusion that no safe means exists for providing relief during childbirth to those mothers who cannot afford the services of a doctor.

"It is now a mere matter of organisation to ensure that no woman is forced to suffer on account of poverty. The new Midwifery Service provided by the recent Midwives Act will greatly assist the provision of these facilities to all women, rich and poor . . .

"This important result is the outcome of the pioneer work of many doctors during the last 100 years, and especially of the untiring efforts of Dr. Minnitt, of Liverpool, and Dr. Elam, of New Barnet, and their co-workers. I would like also to pay tribute to the enthusiastic support given by the late Lord Knutsford.

"On behalf of thousands of mothers who have already benefited by their work, and the hundreds of thousands more who will benefit in future, I would like to tender my most heartfelt thanks to all those who have helped to make this achievement possible."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)