

Approximately 120 pupil-midwives have discontinued training, or have cancelled their registration before beginning training, for reasons connected with the war. On March 31st, 1940, the number of pupil-midwives in training in first and second period training schools was higher than the number immediately prior to the outbreak of war.

It is possible that as the war progresses the need for the services of State Registered nurses for the nursing of war casualties may lead many of these nurses, who otherwise would have entered on midwifery training, to postpone doing so. In this connection the Board wishes to express the opinion that if any State Registered nurse intends ultimately to practise as a midwife, she would be advised not to postpone beginning midwifery training. The midwifery service is one of vital national importance and by preparing herself to enter it a nurse will not only be serving her own interests, but will also be acting in those of the State.

Examinations.

So far it has been possible to hold the examinations for pupil-midwives at the usual three-monthly intervals and while it must be recognised that arrangements may have to be cancelled or altered at short notice, the Board will endeavour to carry on a regular examination programme, in order that a steady supply of midwives may be maintained for the service. It was the practice in peace-time for the written part of the First Examination to be held in London and seven provincial centres, and for the oral and practical part to be held at six centres. In view of the desirability of avoiding any large concentration of candidates, of reducing travel by candidates to a minimum and of ensuring that during the winter months such travel is undertaken, so far as possible, in daylight, arrangements have been made for the candidates to take the written part at their training schools, additional centres for the oral and practical part have been formed and the time of the examination has been changed.

The number of candidates for the Second Examination being comparatively small, there has not been any difficulty in carrying out the original programme. This examination was held for the first time in December, 1939.

Instruction of A.R.P. Workers in Midwifery.

The Board was informed that in certain parts of the country women in the A.R.P. service were being given a short and superficial training in midwifery (including a method of expressing the placenta). While the Board fully appreciated the laudable motive behind the giving of such training, it felt bound to draw attention to the dangers likely to arise in view of the unsatisfactory and incomplete nature of the instruction. It informed the Minister of Health of its views and suggested that, if a woman begins labour while in an air-raid shelter during an air raid she should be regarded as a civilian casualty and conveyed to a hospital or to a first-aid post where a doctor is in attendance or, if there is not time or the opportunity, a doctor or midwife should be summoned. Reference was also made to the kind of attention which the Board considered could be given by unqualified persons without endangering the safety of the mother or child.

The Minister of Health informed the Board that he and the Minister of Home Security were entirely in agreement with the views that had been expressed. Steps were accordingly taken to bring an end to the instruction which had come under criticism.

Subsequently the Chairman of the Board assisted the Ministry of Health in the preparation of leaflets containing instructions for the guidance of persons in charge of air-raid shelters if they are called upon to deal with a case of sudden childbirth. The first instruction which is stressed in these

leaflets is that a doctor or midwife should be summoned at the earliest possible moment. The Board is confident that midwives will do all they can to answer such summonses.

Names Added to the Roll.

During the year the names of 1,299 women who had passed the Board's Examination were added to the Roll. This number compares with 3,273 for the last year, 3,102 for the year ended March 31st, 1938, and 2,928 for the year ended March 31st, 1937.

Last year only 27, or 0.2 per cent., of the practising midwives were untrained. These figures compare with 974, or 6.7 per cent., in the year 1929, and 3,623, or 31.5 per cent., in 1919.

Annual Returns from Local Supervising Authorities as to Practising Midwives.

The local supervising authorities returned lists containing the names of 19,585 midwives as having notified their intention to practise in 1939. Of this number, 1,448 were on the lists returned by the local supervising authorities of Wales and Monmouthshire. The total compares with 19,036 in 1938, 16,573 in 1928, and 12,564 in 1918.

Use of Analgesics by Midwives.

During the year approval was granted to five institutions for the purpose of giving instruction in the use of a recognised apparatus for the administration of nitrous oxide and air analgesia by midwives. The total number of institutions approved on March 31st, 1940, was 55, two being jointly approved. All the institutions are approved training schools for pupil-midwives, and 13 give instruction to their own midwives and pupil-midwives only.

As a result of the outbreak of war, 16 institutions have temporarily suspended their courses of instruction.

During the course of the year further representations were received concerning condition (iii) of the Board's ruling. This condition requires that a second person must be present at the time of administration in addition to the midwife in charge of the case. On the ground that this condition makes it practically impossible for women in rural districts to receive analgesia during childbirth the National Birthday Trust Fund and the National Federation of Women's Institutes asked that the condition (iii) should either be dispensed with altogether, or other categories of persons included in the list of "second persons" who might be present to assist the midwife. It was suggested that midwives who had surrendered their certificates under the Midwives Act, 1936, or trained members of the Civil Nursing Reserve, or women possessing recognised Home Nursing Certificates might be included.

In view of the fact that, with regard to its ruling, the Board, for reasons explained in last year's report, has decided to be governed entirely by the recommendations of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, these suggestions were referred to the College. The College was unable to recommend their adoption. At the same time it informed the Board that it had appointed an *ad hoc* Committee to investigate whether the recommendations made by the College with regard to the presence of a second trained person when gas and air analgesia is administered by a midwife, are in fact restricting the availability of gas and air analgesia in rural areas.

Civil Nursing Reserve Advisory Council.

The Board was asked to appoint a representative on the Civil Nursing Reserve Advisory Council which has been set up to take over the functions of the Central Emergency Committee for the Nursing Profession. The Chairman of the Board, who represented the Board on the latter committee, was nominated to represent the Board on the Advisory Council.

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