

The Midwife.

THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

THE REPORT OF THE WORK OF THE BOARD FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31st, 1941.

The Report of the Central Midwives Board annually submitted to the Minister of Health is always a document of great interest and importance, but this year it has been limited to a brief statement of the more important facts and figures.

Roll of Midwives.

On March 31st, 1941, the Roll of Midwives contained the names of 64,440 women, a net increase of 854, compared with the number at the end of 1940.

According to the returns made to the Board by local supervising authorities, the number of midwives who notified their intention to practise during the calendar year 1940 was 15,874, which was 1,347 less than in 1939 and 1,620 less than in 1937, which, in this respect, was the peak year of the last decade. This decrease has come at a time when the calls on the midwifery service are increasing.

An analysis of the midwives who notified intention to practise in 1940 provides the following information:—

(i) Only 11, or 0.07 per cent., were untrained *bond-fide* midwives, *i.e.*, midwives who were enrolled by virtue of having been in *bond-fide* practice prior to the passing of the Midwives Act, 1902.

(ii) Nearly 52 per cent. of the midwives notifying intention to practise in 1940 had been enrolled in the 11 years, 1930 to 1940, and only 13.6 per cent. had been enrolled prior to 1920.

(iii) Excluding the midwives who surrendered their certificates and received compensation under Section 5 of the Midwives Act, 1936, approximately 2,500 midwives who notified intention to practise in 1939 did not do so in 1940. Only about 1,500 midwives entered midwifery practice for the first time in 1940.

(iv) Out of approximately 16,000 midwives enrolled in the five years 1935 to 1939 (almost all of whom had been trained and enrolled under the rules which were superseded by the present training and examination rules of the Board) only about 28 per cent. notified intention to practise in 1940.

Training of Pupil-Midwives.—The Register of Pupils shows that in the 12 months ended March 29th, 1941, 2,178 women began the first period of midwifery training and 1,053 began the second period.

The manner in which the teachers have carried on with the training of pupil-midwives is deserving of the highest praise. In some areas the war has introduced many difficulties. A number of training schools have been damaged by enemy action, but in almost every case there has been surprisingly little interruption in the training of pupil-midwives.

Examinations for Pupil-Midwives.—The Board was fortunate in being able to carry through its examination programme without interruption. To meet war-time conditions, several additional examination centres were formed.

The number of candidates who entered for the first examination was 2,514, and the number who were successful was 1,879, an increase of 513 compared with last year. Of the successful candidates, 1,799 were State Registered nurses. At the second examination there were 948 candidates, of whom 818 were successful.

Midwife-Teachers' Certificate Examination.—Part I. of the Midwife-Teachers' Certificate Examination was held in July and August, 1940; 36 midwives entered and 18 were successful. At Part II. of the Examination, held in

December, 1940, there were 23 candidates, of whom 17 were successful, two passing with distinction. Four of the successful candidates at Part II. were approved teachers.

Penal Cases.—During the year 12 midwives were dealt with by the Board on charges of malpractice, negligence or misconduct. In five of these cases the Board ordered the removal of the name from the Roll and prohibited attendance on women in childbirth in any capacity. In two other cases removal of the name from the Roll alone was ordered. One midwife was cautioned and in two other cases sentence was postponed, in one case in order that the midwife might attend a course of post-certificate instruction, and in the other because it had been impossible to serve a statement of the charge on the midwife. No action was taken in two cases.

No decision given by the Board in any penal proceeding came under review by the High Court.

Apportionment of Contributions between the County Councils and County Borough Councils under Section 5 of the Midwives Act, 1902, and Section 2 of the Midwives Act, 1918.—The levies on the County Councils and County Borough Councils of England and Wales to meet the deficiency in the Board's revenue for the year 1940, collected by apportionment between the various Councils, amounted to £8,997 8s., as compared with £8,140 14s. 1d. for 1939.

Comparing the Board's accounts for 1940 with those for 1939, the total income was less by £1,878 and total expenditure was less by £1,022. The fall in income was mainly due to a decrease in examination entry fees, in receipts from the sale of the Roll of Midwives and other documents, and to a reduction in the rent from the sub-letting of a part of the Board's offices. While most items of expenditure showed decreases, increased expenditure had to be incurred on some items, *e.g.*, A.R.P. expenses, overdraft and telephone charges, staff salaries (incremental increases, and war bonus to clerical staff).

Use of Analgesics by Midwives.—During the year five institutions were approved for the purpose of giving instruction to midwives in the use of a recognised apparatus for the administration of nitrous oxide and air analgesia. The total number of institutions so approved on March 31st, 1941, was 60, two being jointly approved. All but one are approved training schools for pupil-midwives. As a result of the war 16 of these institutions have temporarily suspended their courses of instruction.

Improvised Maternity Homes in Reception Areas.—Throughout the year the Board assisted in the task of obtaining midwives to staff the improvised maternity homes established by the Ministry of Health in reception areas.

Decisions on Midwifery Etiquette and Practice.—Among the decisions on midwifery etiquette and practice made by the Board during the year, the following may be of interest:

(a) A local supervising authority asked for a ruling on the wearing of rings, and in particular wedding rings, by midwives while attending maternity patients. The Board replied that a midwife must remove all rings from her hands before attending a maternity patient.

(b) A County Medical Officer of Health asked for the opinion of the Board on the following case: A midwife employed by a district nursing association had conducted a domiciliary confinement and had attended the patient during the first five days of the puerperium. On the sixth day she was taken off the case by the association and transferred to night duty in the association's maternity home. The district case was attended

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