

THE MIDWIFE.

REPORT OF THE RUSHCLIFFE MIDWIVES' SALARIES COMMITTEE.

Undoubtedly the issue of the Report of the Midwives' Salaries Committee, appointed in May, 1942, is an event of national importance, as just conditions of service and salaries for midwives should provide a service of inestimable value to the mothers of the nation and to future generations of our people. The Committee report that they have kept in touch with the Nurses' Salaries Committee before making recommendations in regard to overlapping matters.

The Midwives' Salaries Committee, in its report to the Minister of Health, recommends that, for the first time, national scales of salaries shall apply to certified midwives employed in maternity work in hospitals or maternity homes, or in the domiciliary midwifery service. The Committee also makes important proposals on uniform, accommodation, hours of duty, and sick pay.

The report points out that midwives deliver two-thirds of the 600,000 babies born in England and Wales every year, and act as maternity nurses under a doctor's direction at most of the remaining confinements. Legislation during the present century has placed midwifery on a sound professional basis, and has done much to improve the status of the midwife, but despite these developments, public opinion has been slow to realise the true status and importance of the midwife or the vital part which she plays to-day in the public health service. A franker and more enlightened attitude towards child-bearing and the midwifery service should be one of the first aims of health education. The Committee states: It is not widely enough understood that, notwithstanding the close relation which midwifery has to the Sister profession of nursing, it is, in fact, a distinct profession with its own traditions.

Midwifery is a closed profession—*i.e.*, the title "midwife" is protected by law, and unqualified practice is illegal. Except for medical practitioners and medical students, only State Certified Midwives or pupil midwives may undertake midwifery. The recommendations of the Midwives' Salaries Committee are admirable. They recommend an adequate scale of salaries; other proposals affect accommodation, holidays and sick pay, and travelling expenses.

EXAMPLES OF SALARIES.

Examples of salaries in the national scales recommended are as follows:—

INSTITUTIONAL MIDWIVES (Resident)

	Annual Salary.	Total Value, Salary and Emoluments.
Matron Training Institution (50-99 beds)	£275 rising by £25 a year to £400.	£425-£550.
Assistant Matron ... (50 beds or over)	£230 rising by £10 to £290.	£350-£410.
Superintendent Midwife... (Training Institution)	Range of £240-£340	£360-£460.
Midwifery Sister (State Certified Midwife and State Registered Nurse).	£150 rising by £10 to £200 (plus £20 after 10 years' service in grade)	£250-£320.
Staff Midwife (S.C.M. and S.R.N.)	£120 rising by £5 to £160.	£210-£250.

It is recommended that a pupil midwife who is already a State registered nurse should receive a salary of £65 a year during training (in addition to emoluments worth

£75). For a pupil midwife who is not a trained nurse the salary should be £40 for the first year, £45 for the second year, and until she has passed her first examination, and £60 during the second period of training.

DOMICILIARY MIDWIVES (Non-resident)

	Annual Salary.
District Midwife (S.C.M. and S.R.N.) ...	£270 rising by £10 to £360.
District Midwife (S.C.M. only) ...	£250 rising by £10 to £350.

Cost of £500,000 a Year.

The Minister of Health has accepted the Committee's recommendations, and is commending them to local authorities for adoption. In the case of midwives employed in institutional midwifery, the Ministry will make a grant to local authorities and voluntary hospitals of 50 per cent. of the additional expenditure incurred. To qualify for this grant an authority must adopt the Committee's proposals in full.

In the case of midwives employed in the domiciliary service under the Midwives Act of 1936, the additional expenditure will be covered by the statutory grant provisions in that Act.

The new national scales will apply to about 10,000 midwives. There are now about 16,000 midwives in practice, but about 6,000 are district nurse midwives, who will be covered in the next report of the Nurses' Salaries Committee. The increased expenditure when the scales are in full operation is estimated at £500,000 a year. In the case of some district midwives the increase in salary will be as high as £100 a year.

The Minister of Health accepts the recommendation that "as soon as it is practicable to do so" he should take steps to give the Central Midwives Board power to frame rules regarding a protected uniform for State-certified midwives.

Hearty congratulations to Certified Midwives. As they deserve, their new status will be all on the upgrade, whilst that of their unfortunate colleagues, the Registered Nurses, becomes less secure day by day, under the Nurses Acts, 1943, the result of financial injustice.

The increased expenditure for midwives is to be met by the Government grants to local authorities and hospitals; and that the practice of some authorities of charging fees to pupil midwives shall be discontinued. All excess expenditure of the Central Midwives Board at present is apportioned between the various counties and county boroughs according to the Midwives Act 1902, as amended by the Midwives Act 1918.

THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

As we go to press we have received the Report of the Central Midwives Board for the year ended March 31st, 1943. It is vitally interesting, a record of work of the utmost importance, and we hope to find space in our next issue to do it justice.

REGISTERED NURSES MUST PROTEST.

It is almost incredible, but the new Nurses Acts, 1943, in England and Scotland gives power to the General Nursing Councils to use the Registered Nurses' money to subsidise any deficit incurred in the organisation of semi-trained Assistant Nurses, as the Treasury has no financial responsibility whatever for financing these bodies.

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