

## The Midwife.

### CONTROL ON MIDWIVES EXTENDED.

The control on practising midwives instituted by the Minister of Labour and National Service last September is to be extended for a further three months.

When the Control of Engagement Order was applied to the nursing and midwifery professions in September, 1943, it was announced that practising midwives would not be allowed under the Order to take employment other than in midwifery for the time being, but that the position would be reviewed in February, 1944. The Minister has now decided, after further consultation with the National Advisory Council for the Recruitment and Distribution of Nurses and Midwives, to extend this arrangement until May 31st, 1944, after which date applications from midwives to take non-midwifery employment or further training will be considered on their merits in the national interest.

It is pointed out, however, that the need for practising midwives is still very great, and it is hoped that applications to give up the practice of midwifery after May 31st will be few and made only for very good reasons.

The requirement on newly qualified midwives to practise in the profession for at least a year after qualifying is not affected by this decision.

### EMPLOYMENT OF NURSES IN INDUSTRIAL NURSING.

A further decision affecting nurses made by the Minister of Labour and National Service after consultation with the National Advisory Council is that in future nurses under the age of 27 years will not in general be permitted to enter industrial nursing employment.

### QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

We are glad to note the good news that the Nurses' Home at Queen Charlotte's Maternity Hospital is to be completed with all dispatch. That this good work should ever have been delayed was most unwise, considering the urgent need for midwives and maternity nurses throughout the country. To be awarded the £30,000 promised by the Bernhard Baron trustees, the Nurses' Home at Queen Charlotte's must be completed by the end of the year. The completion of the Nurses' Home will enable the hospital to take in nearly 1,500 more expectant mothers annually.

### MORE BABIES SHOULD BE BREAST-FED.

Report Recommends Changes in Maternity Hospital Routine.

Further steps should be taken to encourage the breast-feeding of babies, which shows a slight tendency to decline. This recommendation is made by the Ministry of Health's Advisory Committee on the Welfare of Mothers and Young Children, in a report issued recently.

The Report estimates that while 95 per cent. of the babies delivered in their own homes by domiciliary midwives are breast-fed at the end of 14 days, when the midwife leaves, only about 80 per cent. of babies leave the maternity hospital wholly breast-fed. At least 80 per cent. of all babies are wholly breast-fed at the end of two weeks, but only 50 per cent. at the end of three months.

In the Advisory Committee's opinion, after making allowance for the fact that the hospitals tend to accept complicated cases for confinement, the main reason for the difference between home and hospital babies is that in many hospitals the routine of feeding is over-mechanised. Breast-feeding tends to become regimented, over-scientific

and unnatural. In some hospitals babies are weighed too frequently and given artificial feeds too readily. The Report, therefore, recommends:—

More elasticity in the hospital routine of infant management. Appointment of paediatricians, or other medical officers especially interested in babies, to maternity wards or hospitals, with full authority over the care of babies, both normal and abnormal.

Any feed other than a breast-feed should be given only after due consideration in each case, and recorded, together with the reason, on the baby's chart.

The Committee also recommends that there should be an educational film on breast-feeding and more B.B.C. talks and articles in the women's magazines; but "the most substantial results would be achieved if medical students and midwives were to be equipped by organised practical instruction, to recognise and deal adequately with the problems of breast-feeding mothers." Possibly attendances at infant welfare centres should be a compulsory feature of medical education.

"All propaganda designed to urge upon mothers the importance of breast-feeding and all teaching to medical students, pupil midwives, health visitors, should stress the importance of the 'flying start' which breast-feeding can give. Moreover, since there is evidence to show that breast-fed babies are better able to overcome infectious conditions, mothers should be told so and the fact should be emphasised that if they wean their babies without adequate cause, they are allowing them to incur needless risks of infection."

"The fact should be recognised that in the interest of infant health no mother should be forced by economic necessity to wean her baby and return to work during at least the first three months of its existence; and effect should be given at the earliest possible moment, without discrimination between married and unmarried women, to those recommendations of the Beveridge Report which deal with maternity benefit and maternity grant."

In addition, an extended Home Helps Service should be freely used to ease the return of the breast-feeding mother to full domestic responsibilities.

The Report emphasises that "breast-feeding is not a panacea for all the evils of infancy. . . . We submit that efforts to secure more breast-feeding can only be part of the much greater effort needed to combat infant morbidity and mortality and improve infant health."

The Report is being considered by the Ministry of Health with a view to effect being given to its recommendations so far as is practicable.

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