

The Midwife.

PROFESSIONAL REPRESENTATION.

In our last issue we expressed the opinion that the midwives should be directly represented on the Midwives Board, and we hope such a right will be accorded to them as they are the direct representatives of an invaluable profession of women, but unless they unite and make it plain to the Midwives Board that their exclusion is dangerous and out of date, we fear nothing will be done. On the other hand the Minister of Health realises the power of direct representation as the following information recently circulated proves and he can use influence to promote his policy—which as an employer may not always be acceptable to the employed.

NEW APPOINTMENT TO MIDWIVES BOARD.

Miss E. Alden, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer of the Ministry of Health, has been appointed to represent the Ministry as a member of the Central Midwives Board, which is responsible for carrying into effect regulations of the Midwives Acts.

As a practising midwife Miss Alden was in charge of a large rural area in Somerset. She was frequently called upon to cycle miles at night to isolated cottages on the moors.

After a visit in 1930-31 to America and Canada in connection with public health nursing, Miss Alden, who holds the Midwife Teachers Diploma, taught pupil midwives as part of her work at University College Hospital. She joined the Ministry of Health in 1936.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO MIDWIVES UNDERGOING REFRESHER COURSES.

The Minister of Health has had under consideration the serious shortage of practising midwives, and the desirability of encouraging the largest possible number of midwives, who have not recently practised as such, to undergo refresher training and resume midwifery practice.

He has accordingly made arrangements whereby a State Certified Midwife who, whether because of service in the Armed Forces or for any other reason, has not recently practised midwifery but wishes now to do so, may apply for an Exchequer grant to assist her to undergo a refresher midwifery course. The maximum number of persons to be assisted under this scheme is at present one hundred; but the Minister will review the arrangements in the light of experience.

The amount of the grant will depend on the length of the course; it will be at the rate of £15 a month, and the maximum grant will be £45. Payments will be made direct to the midwife at the end of each month, and will be subject to confirmation by the training institution of satisfactory attendance and progress. Where financial assistance is being received from some other source, the Exchequer grant will be reduced by the amount of that assistance.

It will be a condition of the grant that the applicant must sign an undertaking that she will, after finishing the course, practise whole-time midwifery for at least one year, otherwise than in private domiciliary practice, or in private nursing homes.

Midwives who wish to apply for a grant should write in the first instance to the General Secretary, the College of Midwives, 57, Lower Belgrave Street, London, S.W.1. Applicants will be allowed to state a preference for the part of the country in which they wish to take their course;

but the availability of suitable vacancies and facilities must finally determine to what institutions they are allocated for training.

ACCOMMODATION FOR MIDWIVES, DISTRICT NURSES AND HEALTH VISITORS.

The Minister of Health has had his attention drawn to a number of instances in which the efficiency of the public health services is being prejudiced by the difficulty of finding proper and suitably situated accommodation for midwives, district nurses, and health visitors. So far as midwives are concerned, he has recently suggested to Local Supervising Authorities that they should approach the Housing Authority for help in relieving any difficulty of this kind that they may be experiencing. The Authority will be aware of the great advantage to the tenants of their houses to have easy access to the services of these officers. On all larger housing estates it will be to the obvious benefit of the tenants if accommodation can be provided on the estate itself. The Minister does not think that with the present housing stringency it would be right for Authorities to allot a whole house for the sole occupation of a single person, but suitable arrangements can often be made for the midwife or other officer to share a house with other appropriate occupants. The Minister would therefore be glad if the Council would make a special effort to assist any midwife, district nurse or health visitor who may lack suitable accommodation to obtain it, and to make provision for such officers on their larger housing estates in the interests of the tenants of their houses.

*So were it good if at this tyde
That every man upon his syde
Besought and preyed for the Peace
Which is the cause of all increase,
Of worship, and of world's wealth,
Of herte's reste, and soule's health.*

JOHN GOWER (Confessio Amantis (1393) Book L.).

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