

The Midwife.

The Central Midwives Board.

Report of the Work of the Board for the Year ended March 31st, 1949.

THIS year has seen the start of a new era in all branches of the nation's health service. The full effects of the introduction of the National Health Service in its present form on July 5th, 1948, are not yet clear. The new Act has completely altered the maternity services of the country and, although it does not directly amend the Midwives Acts, the new bodies set up are bound to have an effect on their administration, but the National Health Service Act and consequent regulations, together with the report of the Working Party on Midwives, published in January, 1949, will undoubtedly shape the midwifery service of the future.

Annual Meeting and Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

At the annual meeting of the Board held on April 1st, 1948, Mr. Arnold Walker was re-elected Chairman, and Mr. J. P. Hedley was re-elected Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

Roll of Midwives.

There were 77,086 names on the Roll of Midwives at March 31st, 1949, being 214 more than at March 31st, 1948.

The reason why the increase over last year's figures is so small is that, as envisaged in the last Annual Report, the Board began the heavy task of clearing the Roll as provided for in Section 3 (2) of the Midwives Act, 1926. Under this procedure a registered letter is addressed to each midwife at the address appearing on the Roll of Midwives. For the present clearance the Board is circularising every midwife who was enrolled before 1946 but who has not practised since 1943. The midwife is asked whether she has ceased to practise or has changed her address. In her reply she may elect to retire voluntarily and her name is accordingly removed from the Roll. In addition, if no reply at all is received within six months of the date of despatch of the letter, the Board is authorised to remove her name from the Roll at the end of that period.

Up to March 31st, 1949, 15,098 midwives have been circularised and the names of 2,587 have been removed from the Roll. Of this number, 521 elected to retire voluntarily and 440 were found to be dead; from the balance of 1,626 no reply was received and their names were removed after the stipulated period of six months had elapsed. It is estimated also that, although in their cases the six-month period had not expired within the period covered by this report, the names of some additional 6,000 of the 15,098 already circularised will be shortly due for removal.

Midwives Notifying Intention to Practise in 1948.

17,819 midwives notified their intention to practise in the year ended December 31st, 1948, in accordance with Section 10 of the Midwives Act, 1902. In its last Annual Report the Board indicated that the number of 17,400 notifying intention to practise in 1947 was the highest since 1940. It will be seen that the figure for 1948 is 419 higher than that for 1947 and the steady increase recorded since 1942,

when the figure was 15,615, has been most satisfactorily maintained.

An interesting feature emerging from an analysis of the returns is that, of the 17,819 women who notified intention to practise, 5,679, or 31 per cent. of those actually practising midwifery, were non-state-registered nurses.

Training of Pupil Midwives.

The number of Pupil Midwives entering first period training institutions during the year ended March 31st, 1949, showed a substantial decrease of 486 on the previous year's figures. Furthermore, the increase in the number of second period pupils reported last year has not been maintained, as this year a fall of 199 compared with the previous year has been experienced. Figures of the quarterly intake into training schools are given in Table V together with corresponding figures for 1947-48.

Of the 4,025 pupil midwives entering first period training schools in 1948-49, 3,777 (or 94 per cent.) did so under the reduced period of training allowed to state-registered nurses and registered sick children's nurses.

Of the total of 4,877 entrants for the First Examination during the year under review, all but 280, and of the 3,089 entrants for the Second Examination, all but 176 were state-registered nurses or registered sick children's nurses. The corresponding figures for last year were 166 and 150 respectively.

The number of First Examination passes was 138 less than last year, a decrease of 3.6 per cent. In the Second Examinations, however, an increase of 6.0 per cent. in the number of entries and 5.9 per cent. in the number of passes was experienced. It will be remembered that in the previous report these figures were recorded as increases of 35.2 per cent. and 36.3 per cent. respectively over the year before.

Midwife Teachers Diploma Examination.

Non-residential courses of instruction were conducted in London, Birmingham and Liverpool, and in addition two residential intensive courses were conducted in London, one starting in February, 1948, and the second in August, 1948, each of four months' duration.

Part I of the Midwife Teachers Diploma Examination was held in June and November, 1948, and of 176 entries 53 candidates were successful. Part II was held in June and December, 1948, and of 63 entries 34 candidates were successful.

Report of the Working Party on Midwives.

The report of the Working Party on Midwives was published in January, 1949. The records of the Board had been placed at the disposal of the Working Party, and a certain amount of statistical information had been prepared for them.

The Board welcomed the report, and proceeded to give urgent consideration to the recommendations contained therein.

In the first instance it was decided to address a memorandum to the Minister of Health setting out the views of the Board on some of the short-term recommendations of the report and stating that, while the Board proposed to comment more fully on the report in due course, it would be glad to

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