

The Midwife.

Central Midwives Board.

REPORT OF THE WORK OF THE BOARD
FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31st, 1950.

THE YEAR UNDER REVIEW is the first complete year on which the Board has had to report since the establishment of the National Health Service. The most pressing problem administratively has arisen from the division of the maternity services under separate types of authority, each entrusted with powers and duties to operate a particular section of the service. The Board is responsible for the practice of midwives, both institutional and domiciliary, and the high standards of present-day midwifery training have been based on a careful linking of hospital and domiciliary teaching. At least half of the second period of training of all midwives must be taken on approved districts, and at least ten domiciliary cases must be attended by the second period pupil. During the period to which this report relates, there has been a marked decline in domiciliary midwifery and particularly in cases available for the training of pupil-midwives. It is essential if the present standard is at least to be maintained that the co-operation of the separate authorities responsible for domiciliary and hospital midwifery in each area must be assured.

In March, 1949, Sir Allen Daly retired from membership of the Board. His resignation was accepted with regret and the Board placed on record its deep appreciation of his contribution to the work of the Board as a representative of the Minister of Health since 1930 and to the development of the midwifery service throughout England and Wales during that period.

Dr. J. A. Scott was appointed by the Minister of Health to take the place of Sir Allen Daly in April, 1949.

Roll of Midwives.—There were 64,490 names on the Roll of Midwives at March 31st, 1950, being 12,596 less than at March 31st, 1949.

The reason for the decrease in this figure compared with last year is that the clearance of the Roll, which was commenced in July, 1948, in accordance with Section 3 (2) of the Midwives Act, 1926, was continued throughout the year. In consequence 37,753 midwives have been circularised up to March 31st, 1950, and the names of 18,096 have been removed from the Roll. Of this number, in 1,504 cases the Board has been notified of the death of the midwife and the names of 1,697 midwives have been removed in consequence of voluntary retirement; from the balance of 14,895 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 5,500 of the 37,753 midwives already circularised will eventually be due for removal.

Midwives Notifying Intention to Practise in 1949.—In accordance with Section 10 of the Midwives Act, 1902, 18,053 midwives notified their intention to practise in the year ended December 31st, 1949. This number of notifications, which is 234 higher than that for 1948, is the highest since 1940, and continues the steady increase which has been maintained since 1942, when the figure was 15,615.

An analysis of the returns shows that, of the 18,053 women who notified intention to practise, 5,349 or 30 per cent. of those actually practising midwifery, were non-state registered nurses, 5,517, or 31 per cent. of the total, were known to be married.

Midwives who during 1949 Notified Intention to Act as Maternity Nurses only.—According to returns submitted to the Board by local supervising authorities, the number of

women who notified intention to act as maternity nurses only was 850.

Defence Regulation 33.—Defence Regulation 33, made under the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act, 1939, empowers a local supervising authority to make orders authorising women whose names were removed from the Roll under section 5 (1) of the Midwives Act, 1936, to act as midwives, provided that there is a shortage in the area of that authority. The validity of this regulation was extended to December 10th, 1950, by the Emergency Laws (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1947.

Orders have been made in respect of 366 former midwives under the regulation, although the number of those who gave notice of intention to practise during 1949 was only 61. Under the terms of section 5 (9) of the Midwives Act, 1936, it will not be possible for the names of any of these women to be restored to the Roll and, in the absence of further legislation, their services will not be available after the end of 1950.

Penal cases.—Eight penal cases were dealt with by the Board at Special Meetings held under the provisions of Section D of the rules. The names of four midwives were removed from the Roll of Midwives and their certificates cancelled following the hearing of the charges alleged against them. In each case the midwife had previously been convicted in a Court of Law; three of stealing or unlawfully procuring dangerous drugs, and the fourth of forgery and theft. Two cases resulted in the midwives being severely censured and the local supervising authority was asked to report on their conduct at the end of six months' practice. One midwife was cautioned and severely censured, and in the remaining case no action was taken.

Rules of the Board.—The application of the provisions of the Statutory Instruments Act, 1946, to the rules of the Board was referred to in the last Annual Report. As a consequence, the whole of the rules of the Board was reprinted in Statutory Instrument 1800 of 1949, which is the Instrument of the Minister's approval to the rules. Verbal changes throughout have been necessary in order to meet the form of a Statutory Instrument. Statutory Instrument 2272 of 1949 authorised further changes to the Board's rules, including in the body of the rules the conditions under which a midwife may administer gas and air analgesia.

Training of Pupil-midwives.—The number of pupil-midwives entering first period training institutions during the year ended March 31st, 1950, showed an increase of 465 on the previous year's figures, while the number of pupils entering second period institutions has increased by 66.

Of the 4,490 pupil-midwives entering first period training schools in 1949-50, 4,192 (or 93 per cent.) did so under the reduced period of training allowed to state-registered nurses and registered sick children's nurses.

Wastage during training, which is confined almost entirely to the first period, has averaged 8.6 per cent. of registrations.

Approval of First and Second Period Schools.—Throughout the year the Board has constantly reviewed the position in existing first and second period training schools. The number of approved places in first period schools continued to exceed the supply of pupils, but, despite every attempt to increase second period training facilities, the margin between the number of places available and pupils coming forward continues to be very small. The Board has, therefore, maintained its policy of not approving any new first period schools nor any increase in the number of approved places at the first period training schools.

Of the total of 4,697 entrants for the First Examination during the year under review, all but 276, and of the 3,069 entrants for the Second Examination, all but 229 were state-

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