

A Joint Committee of the Education Department, Secondary School Inspectors, and nursing officers of the Department has been outlining a curriculum which might be taken at secondary schools subsequent to the general School Certificate for those girls who are too young to enter for training and yet who are interested in nursing as a career. It is hoped to have this curriculum ready by the end of this year and to use it to recruit girls with the right educational background.

All our hospitals provide class-rooms and instructions, but if a hospital is to be a school as well as a hospital it must provide the real educational background of general interest by all members of the staff, and conditions of work must be such that the student can really study not only the theoretical course outlined for her, but the rich clinical field in which she is working.

There is no doubt that where a Hospital Board has an adequate staff and can provide a block or study-day system of teaching the results are far reaching, and in the end, because of the conditions attracting girls, the hospital is able to give a better service to its patients.

Domestic Staff.—In spite of the fact that a new award with an increase in wages and a universal forty-hour week has come into being, there is still a marked shortage of workers in some hospitals.

Housing is a definite difficulty. The majority of hospitals depended on obtaining domestic staff who lived out, but now this is impossible, and it would appear that those Boards who can house this staff are in a position of advantage.

If only it were possible to obtain more workers with a little instruction they might be given a wider range of duties, which, in turn, might make their work more attractive and would certainly assist the nursing staff to a much greater degree. There is no reason why they should not be taught to assist convalescent patients, feed helpless patients, and many other simple nursing duties.

OBSTETRICAL NURSING SERVICE

As already stated, this year has been marked by a very large increase in New Zealand's birth-rate, 47,647 births, of which an additional 4,618 took place in the maternity hospitals which are training-schools. This was largely because many of the private maternity hospitals closed owing to the age and infirmity of the licensees, difficulties over staff, and rising costs. This meant that the beds and the staffs in the training-schools had to be increased.

To assist with the recruitment of registered maternity nurses and midwives, in addition to appeals in the nursing journal and through broadcasts, a personal circular letter was sent to every registered maternity nurse and midwife. A survey of the position was made for every hospital in the Dominion every quarter to see which district and hospital required help most urgently, and, in addition to every pupil midwife completing her training being interviewed as regards her future, which has been done for some time, every pupil maternity nurse has been interviewed as well. These personal interviews have been carried out by the nursing officers of Head Office, together with the Nurse Inspectors of the District Offices. The result has been that for 759 beds with an occupied bed rate of 614 and a total of 15,226 confinements there has been a staff of 139 midwives and 92 maternity nurses—that is, 231 registered obstetric nurses and 437 midwifery and maternity trainees—which is equal to a staff of 668, or more than 1 nurse to 1 patient, or 1 registered obstetric nurse to 1 nurse to 3 patients, or 1 registered obstetric nurse to 2 trainees. This result can be regarded as very satisfactory under the circumstances.