

CRISIS IN MIDWIFERY EDUCATION.

Are mothers and babies important to New Zealand?

If so, we need more midwives!

Since 1979 when midwifery training was transferred from the St Helens hospitals to the technical institutes, N.Z. has trained a total of only 138 midwives - an average of 23 p.a. (1980-85) Under the St Helens programmes an average of 157 midwives were trained each year.

In 1981 there were 3621 midwives holding an annual practising certificate. In 1986 there were 2982 - 639 fewer. Not only that, a mere 8.78% (262) of these are under 30 years of age, while 25.2% (753) are over 50 years of age; 62.4% (1861) are between 30 - 49 years. (Table 1).

Most of our midwives (85%) now come from overseas. Approximately 28% of these overseas trained midwives are N.Z. nurses who have gone overseas to gain a midwifery certificate. (Table 2). At the Midwives Conference, Christchurch 1986, Margaret Peters, Deputy Director of Nursing, Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne, accused N.Z. of using the Australian health dollar to train its midwives. She said that the state of Victoria would no longer accept out-of-state nurses for midwifery programmes.

Last year (1986) the Nursing Council registered 206 midwives of which 177 trained overseas. Even with this high intake from off-shore there are insufficient midwives to meet current needs.

Furthermore, these midwives are not necessarily permanent residents, i.e. aside from being bludgers we cannot depend on this source for our longterm needs.

The current N.Z. midwifery training is merely a 'midwifery option' within the Advanced Diploma of Nursing (ADN). Although this course provides a broader education in general, a recent Evaluation of this course by the Department of Education (1987) found that half the nurses who undertook the ADN course, mainly to qualify as midwives, said it was 'unsatisfactory' or 'very unsatisfactory'. They were 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with both the theoretical and clinical components of the course. Twenty-two percent of supervisors and senior nurse colleagues agreed that the midwifery option within the ADN was "a major weakness" - the workload was too great and the clinical experience inadequate. Most senior

nurse administrators and some tutors felt that the midwifery qualification should be obtained before nurses undertook the Advanced Diploma in Maternal and Child Health. (pp 25 & 60). In fact, the Evaluation admits that the midwifery issue was 'the most notable' one as midwifery is regarded as a basic level registration and 'nurses who undertake a course leading to a midwifery registration have different requirements from most nurses seeking an advanced diploma'. (p7).

Since 1980 the Midwives Section (NZNA) has been 'urgently' petitioning the Minister of Education to provide a separate midwifery course leading to registration, leaving the ADN for midwives wishing to further their education. The Evaluation now actually endorses this saying the ADN is a 'post-graduate course to provide in-depth post-basic courses outside universities for registered nurses with leadership potential' (p1) The present midwifery option within the ADN is attempting to cram both a basic and a post-basic midwifery training into one academic year. The National Midwives Section now recommends

That midwifery be separated from the Advanced Diploma in Nursing. This new midwifery course will need to be restructured and must retain its registration.

J.D. July 1987.

TABLE 1

N.Z. MIDWIVES REGISTERED/TRAINED IN N.Z. AND OVERSEAS

Year ending 31.3	Registrations Total	Trained in N.Z.		Trained overseas		N.Z. nurses who trained overseas	
		no	%	no	%	no	%
1973	241	151		90			
1974	321	161		160			
1975	218	160		158			
1976	283	162		121			
1977	283	157		126			
1978	291	185		106			
1979	259	163		96			
1980	216	120		96			
1981	146	18		128			
1982	134	13		121			
1983	171	24	14	147	86	39	26.5
1984	196	23	11.73	173	88.26	56	28.57
1985	144	27	18.75	117	81.25	39	33.3
1986	206	29	14.	177	85.9	39	22.

Sources: Save the Midwives, vol 1 No 2 Jan 1984 (1973-1982)
 Reports of Nursing Council of New Zealand(1983-1986)

TABLE 2

MIDWIVES PRACTISING IN NEW ZEALAND 1986

Category	Age 19-29	30-49	over 50	not recorded	60+
Midwife	2	107	55	1	11
Gen/obs midwife	234	1709	672	98	126
Comp/midwife	17	17	...	1	...
Bridging	9	28	26	6	5
Totals	262	1861	753	106	142
%	8.78	62.4	25.2	3.5	4.7

COMPARATIVE TABLE - 1981 and 1986

Year	No registered	under 30	30-49	over 50
1981	3621	13.5%	60.9%	25.3%
1986	2982	8.78%	62.4%	25.2%
	-639	-4.72	+2.5	- .1

Sources: The Nursing Workforce in New Zealand 1986 p71

Bazley, Margaret, Midwifery Manpower for New Zealand in the 80's and 90's, Midwives Seminar papers pp 18-28, May 1982