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## POLITICS/NEWS

# Malcolm aims to outlaw 'peculiar births'

SOME BABIES come into the world in a "pretty peculiar" way, the Minister of Health, Mr Malcolm, told Parliament yesterday when he introduced a bill designed to lay down higher standards for midwives attending home births.

The Nurses Amendment Bill proposes that registered midwives who attend women in childbirth in a place not con-

trolled by a hospital board or licensed private hospital must be registered general and obstetric nurses as well.

Mr Malcolm said some "pretty peculiar and amateuristic attempts" were made to deliver babies, and women and children had to be properly protected.

He was replying to a point raised by Opposition health

spokesman Dr Michael Bassett (Te Atatu), who said women wanting a home birth had been complaining for some time that it was difficult to get a midwife, yet the bill tightened the rules.

"It would seem on the face of it, that if it's difficult to get a midwife now, it will be even more difficult when this particular clause comes into effect," Dr Bassett said.

Parliament, he said, had to be aware of what the practical effect of that would be on the Home Births Association, which promoted home birth as safe and desirable and in the best interests of mother and child.

But Mr Malcolm said he wanted to dissuade Dr Bassett from the view that the bill was directly related to the home births question.

It had more to do with protecting standards, he said.

The bill also gives the medical officer of health the power to suspend, for one month, a nurse found to be practising in an unhygienic manner.

Brought to Parliament after requests from the Nursing Council, the Nurses' Association and the Public Service Association, the bill also provides for the addition of a lay mem-

ber to the Nursing Council, and would grant power to the council to publish the decisions of any disciplinary hearing.

It also clarifies the distinction between nursing courses conducted at technical institutes and hospital-based nursing training programmes.

The bill was referred to the health and welfare select committee. — NZPA