

some professional nurses been permitted to take part therein, more common sense views might have been expressed on the question.

The Sydney press has some trenchant expressions of opinion on the subject, which I enclose.

THE WORKING HOURS OF NURSES.

THE EIGHT-HOUR PRINCIPLE TO BE ADOPTED WHERE POSSIBLE.

Mr. Griffith moved: "That in the opinion of this House the working hours of the nurses and female attendants employed in all hospitals or asylums in New South Wales which are controlled or subsidized by the Government should be regulated in conformity with the eight-hour clauses in the Factories Act." He pointed out that the Factories Act provided that females should not be employed for more than forty-eight hours in any one week, but in the hospitals, and other charitable institutions, the nurses were called upon to work for something like seventy hours every week. There were plenty of persons ready to support the eight-hour principle for men, apparently because they had votes, but when it came to granting the same privilege to women it seemed to be quite a different matter. But it was against all reason and justice, that women should be called upon to work longer hours than men. The figures which had been supplied by the Government to Mr. Dacey in regard to the working hours of the nurses at the Coast Hospital, might be taken to represent the state of affairs in all the other Government institutions of a similar character. These figures showed that the nurses at the hospital named worked eleven hours one day and nine the other, an average of ten hours a day. They were called upon to work seven days a week, which thus kept them on duty seventy hours a week. It had been said that to bring the eight-hour principle into operation in connection with the Coast Hospital, would involve an increased annual expenditure of about £6000, while to bring it into force generally all over the colony would increase the expenditure by £70,000. The figures with regard to the Coast Hospital, however, were absurd. At the present time the total amount paid to the nurses at that institution was less than one thousand pounds per annum, and the introduction of the principle he was contending for would require an increase of the staff of only one-third. He also complained of the excessive charges which the nurses at the Coast Hospital were called upon to pay for board and lodging, and concluded by stating that the justice and reasonableness of his motion were so self-evident that little really was required to be said to secure for it general approval.

Mr. Dacey intimated that the nurses at the Coast Hospital would prefer a month's holiday each year, and two days' relief every month, instead of having their hours reduced to forty-eight in each week. To enable this to be done, nine additional nurses would be required.

Dr. Graham said it had been found, by a select committee which inquired into the matter, that so far as the English system was concerned the condition of the nurse was very satisfactory, and even bordered on the luxurious. He was prepared to say that the condition of the nurses in this country was as satisfactory, and even more so, than in the English hospitals. The hon. member had missed the chief grievance in connection with the hospitals. It was the doctors who were sweated, if anybody was. They worked night

and day, and got the handsome remuneration of about three shillings a day. He knew of no class who were healthier than the nursing class, and who were better looked after, and had a better standing in the community.

Mr. Copeland said that whatever might be the condition of the nurse, that of the probationer was certainly not satisfactory. The hon. member for Belmore should inquire how many girls had gone to Prince Alfred Hospital, and after staying there for a time had left, broken down in health and disgusted with their conditions there.

Dr. Graham: I was at Prince Alfred Hospital for eight years, and it was the rarest thing possible for anyone to break down or go away, unless sent, because of being absolutely unfit for the work morally, mentally, or physically.

Mr. Copeland: From his own personal knowledge he knew that the probationary nurses were worked like slaves. They were made to do charwoman's work, and the most objectionable kind at that. He believed a lot of the trouble arose because there were not sufficient probationers. The discipline at the hospitals, too, was outrageous for any respectable girl to have to submit to. They were asked to perform duties that no decent girl ought to perform. It was high time the Government looked into this matter, and saw that the nurses were not treated worse than the labouring men of the country.

Mr. Whiddon said he knew a great many nurses, and had never heard them complain. They did their work cheerfully and well, and while they did not complain he did not know that anyone else should.

Mr. Fegan did not think the Government would be justified in interfering with the management of the hospitals to the extent desired by the hon. member for Waratah.

Mr. M'Gowen thought the force of the argument was certainly in favour of the hon. member for Waratah, and that the resolution must commend itself to the good sense and judgment of the members of the House.

Mr. Waddell said the hon. member was absolutely correct in taking up the matter. He knew that strong complaints had been made by nurses all over the colony about the long, weary hours they had to work.

Mr. Crick desired to move an amendment to include all female servants, young and old, in the scope of the resolution, so that the servant girl away on the Diamantina might be protected from long hours as well as the nurses.

Mr. Affleck pointed out that the motion would embrace every hospital in the country. At the present time many of those in the country towns were unable to pay their way, and to be obliged to increase the staffs to meet the motion would cripple them altogether.

Mr. Sleath also complained that the motion was too far-reaching. There were occupations of such a nature that it was impossible to limit the working day to eight hours. Hospitals were largely self-governing institutions, and if the members of local committees were not humane in their treatment of nurses and attendants, they would soon be deprived of their seats.

Mr. M'Donald said there could be no comparison between females employed in factories and nurses in hospitals. In the one case they were called upon to start at a certain hour, and to work hard until knocking-off time. In the other they frequently had little or nothing to do for a considerable portion of the time

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