

Special General Meeting of the Royal British Nurses' Association.

On Friday, the 8th inst., a Special General Meeting of the Royal British Nurses' Association was held at 11, Chandos Street, W., to consider a Report from the General Council with reference to the presentation of a Bill, "For the State Registration of Trained Nurses," to the House of Commons.

Mr. Pickering Pick, F.R.C.S., presided, and was supported on the platform by Mr. John Langton, Hon. Treasurer, and Dr. Comyns Berkeley, Medical Honorary Secretary.

Four medical and about seventy nurse members were present, but no Matron of a representative training-school attended the meeting to our knowledge.

The Chairman called on Dr. Comyns Berkeley to read the notice convening the meeting. He read instead a letter from the President, H.R.H. Princess Christian, instructing him to call a special general meeting.

Dr. Berkeley then gave a brief verbal report of the manner in which the subject to be discussed had been dealt with during the past year by the Association. A member, Miss James, had asked leave at the April Council meeting for registration to be considered, and brought the same suggestion before the annual meeting in June. This was agreed to. A sub-committee had been appointed to deal with the matter, and reported to the Executive Committee, which had presented a Synopsis of a Proposed Bill for the Registration of Trained Nurses to the General Council two days previously, on Wednesday, January 6th, which, with a few alterations, was the Synopsis of the Bill they were met to consider.*

In reference to the first clause, Dr. Berkeley said medical men had been given representation on the Central Board because their work came in contact with that of nurses, and it was thought that nurses might like to be guided by them.

A Synopsis of a Proposed Bill for the "State Registration of Trained Nurses" was then presented clause by clause for the consideration of those present.

The crux of the whole question, the composition of a Central Board, was the only part of the Synopsis which was materially altered.

Section 2 (a), proposed by Mrs. Latter and seconded by Miss G. Scott, provided for the appointment of:—"Nine registered medical practitioners appointed for three years, and eligible for re-election; one to be appointed by the Royal College of Physicians of London, one by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of England, one by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Edinburgh, one by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ireland, one by the Society of Apothecaries, one by the Royal British Nurses' Association, one by the Incorporated Midwives' Institute, and two Provincial Registered Medical Practitioners to be appointed by the General Medical Council."

Mr. Langton said medical men ought certainly to have seats on the Central Board, as nurses had most of their work from them, and they had given much

time and money to the nurses' affairs. He proposed that one instead of two Provincial Registered Medical Practitioners should be appointed by the General Medical Council, and that one medical practitioner should be appointed by the Asylum Workers' Association, and Dr. Heron proposed that one medical practitioner should be appointed by the British Medical Association—these proposals were agreed to—increasing the nominated medical practitioners to ten instead of nine.

(b) This clause proposed that three lay members (referred to as laymen) should be appointed by the Lord President of the Council. This was agreed to.

(c) This clause provided for "three nurse representatives, one representative of the Army and Navy to be appointed by the Medical Directors-General of the two Services, one by the Royal British Nurses' Association, and one by the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses." This was agreed to.

(d) provided seats for "nine Matrons or Lady Superintendents who are fully-trained nurses; three to be elected by Metropolitan hospitals with training-schools attached, three by Provincial hospitals with training-schools attached, one by Scotch hospitals with training-schools attached, one by Irish hospitals with training-schools attached, and one by Welsh hospitals with training-schools attached."

The Medical Hon. Secretary explained here that some mistake had been made in reference to this clause and that it had been altered by the General Council Meeting to "mean what it meant."

It was the intention of the sub-committee that the Matrons should be elected by the Matrons, and not by the hospitals, as stated in the Draft Synopsis before the meeting, and he therefore read the following clause:—(d) Nine fully-trained Nurses, who are Matrons or Lady Superintendents of Hospitals and Infirmarys with training-schools attached, to be elected by the Matrons of the hospitals and infirmarys in the respective areas represented.

A nurse-member suggested that as the medical representation had been increased to ten, the Matrons representation should also be increased to that number.

Mr. Langton pointed out a difficulty, and said the number—nine—had been originally agreed to so that three members could retire every three years.

Miss Scott proposed that a lady in connection with the Asylum Workers' Association might be added.

Mrs. Latter said a society which had done a good deal of work on the Registration question was the Matrons' Council, and she proposed that the Matrons' Council should appoint a representative. This was seconded by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, and agreed to.

With these alterations Clause (d) was adopted.

We would here point out that the alteration in this clause is of vital importance to the profession at large, and concedes what we have claimed for the Matrons of training-schools—the right of Matrons to elect a certain number of their class to represent the nursing interest on the Central Board—thus taking their seats as the elect of their peers, and not as the nominees of lay hospital boards, under which arrangement they would not be free agents, and could not in any way be considered representative of the interests of registered nurses at large. This concession to professional feeling places the R.B.N.A. Bill on an entirely different footing from that on which it stood when it contained the original clause. As the ten seats given to the Matrons

* We are of opinion, as a member of the R.B.N.A., that the consent of the members should have been obtained before legislation was decided upon, and also that we should have been kept informed through our official organ of the progress of the movement.

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