

illegal conduct of their business by their hon. officers, he is right to judge as an outsider. Had he attended meetings where free speech and liberty of conscience were denied by means of gross intimidation, he would, we feel sure, have realised that silence on the part of those injured would have ultimately been far more injurious to the "tone" of the nursing profession than the example they have given of dauntless courage in the support of truth and justice. We founded our Association to provide for the State Registration of Nurses, and thus "to unite all qualified nurses in membership of a recognised profession," and, in spite of the most unscrupulous betrayal of this principle, the R.B.N.A. has now, after ten years' opposition, been faced by the alternative of supporting once more the principle of organisation of nursing by State Registration, or, for all practical purposes, of ceasing to exist.

Mr. Holland claims that because he is opposed to our views—that is, to the organisation of nursing as a profession—this is no reason why we should "attack" the system of nursing at the London. We will substitute the word criticise for attack. The position is simple. In dealing with the organisation of nursing one cannot omit the industrial condition of the worker; it is vital to the question, and it is when we inquire into the economic aspect of Registration that we realise the chief opposition to this reform comes from the London Hospital, an institution where the terms of employment of nurses are open to question.

The London Hospital is the only nurse-training school of importance in the United Kingdom which clings tenaciously to the two years' term of practical training in the wards as opposed to the three years' term which has been accepted, by an overwhelming consensus of expert opinion, both at home and abroad, as the minimum time in which women can gain such efficient training in practical skill as will qualify them to claim to be thoroughly-trained nurses.

We also find that the London exacts four years' service from its probationers, and that at the end of their second year, instead of promoting them to be staff nurses in the wards, they are compelled, as the "Matron may require," to act as nurses for gain in private houses.

Last year the hospital made a clear profit of £4,000 by these private duty nurses.

We are bound to ask ourselves "How would Registration affect this system?" and we are compelled to own that it is probable it would sweep it away.

The need of a Central Nursing Board is imperative, because at present each hospital is dealing with nursing problems from its own standpoint, a standpoint which leaves the nurse helpless in relation to her profession. In no branch of industrial work are the workers so absolutely at the disposal of their employers. We feel very strongly in regard to hospitals, which work on a charitable basis, that it is the duty of the State to provide that they, in common with other employers of labour, should be required to guarantee fair conditions of work in return for services rendered.

Of recent years the conditions under which nurses work have been greatly improved, but we speak with a knowledge extending over a quarter of a century when we say that in the past not only the health but the lives of nurses have been sacrificed to the conditions of work imposed upon them by charitable boards, and, however high-minded and honourable the persons

composing a training-school committee may be, to admit that their control of their employees should be absolute and final is to lay down a very unsound economic principle. We hold it to be the duty of the State to broadly define what constitutes a just contract between committees of hospitals and their employees. At present a nurse in training has not the protection afforded to domestic servants, who are entitled to a month's notice or a month's wages. Thus, in our opinion a system which permits the Matron of a hospital to discharge probationers at a moment's notice, as can be and has been done, gives one official undue and unlimited power. It is only right that, within due limits, nurses should have guaranteed to them just conditions of work and a defined curriculum of education.

The Registration of Nurses by Act of Parliament is the only means by which a general standard of knowledge and a definite system of professional control can be obtained.

Apart from the nursing question, we yield to no one in our admiration for Mr. Holland's strenuous work in connection with the Chairmanship at the London Hospital, the result of which has been to place it in the very forefront of the scientific institutions of the world devoted to the relief of the sick.

Doctors in Council.

A meeting of medical men was held at the House of Commons on Tuesday, when it was decided to form a Public Health Committee. Amongst those present were Dr. Farquharson, Dr. Hutchinson, Dr. Rutherford Harris, Sir Michael Foster, and Sir John Batty Tuke. The Committee is to be on much the same lines as the Service Committees. All the other doctors in the House and a certain number of laymen are to be invited to join, and the object will be to look after all matters affecting public health. Dr. Farquharson is to preside over the Committee's deliberations, and Sir Michael Foster will act as honorary secretary.

The King's Fund.

The Prince of Wales presided on Tuesday at the annual meeting of the General Council of King Edward's Hospital Fund for London, held at Marlborough House. In moving the adoption of the report, the Prince of Wales said he thought they might be well satisfied with the results achieved. The invested capital now owned by the Fund amounted to £664,255. He read a letter from a friend, who desired to remain anonymous, offering, in anticipation of a provision in his will, to hand over to the Fund securities representing the capital sum required to provide one-third of the sum wanted to make up the £14,000 a year still needed to raise the invested funds to £50,000 a year, if the remaining two-thirds were provided by the end of the present year. In making this gift the donor expressed the hope that the Prince, as President, would see his way to prevent any portion of the funds subscribed for the relief of the sick poor from being diverted to purposes of medical education.

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