

## The Royal British Nurses' Association.

### THE NURSE MEMBERS INSIST ON DIRECT REPRESENTATION.

We preface our report of the Special General Meeting of the Royal British Nurses' Association—convened to consider the Re-drafted Bill for the State Registration of Nurses—by congratulating those members who attended the meeting determined to amend the Bill proposed by the Executive Committee and endorsed by the Council. They succeeded in very materially altering the Bill for the better, and their fellow members are greatly indebted to them.

Incidentally, we may mention that it was extremely interesting to watch the voting. Broadly speaking, it was the Matrons and younger nurses who strove to obtain amendments to the Bill for the benefit of the nursing profession at large. The few medical practitioners present and the older private nurses—although amongst the latter there were exceptions—supported the Executive Committee in removing six of the seven direct representatives of the nurses on the governing body.

The meeting took place on Wednesday afternoon last at 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square. The chair was taken by Dr. Bezly Thorne, who presented to the meeting the issues involved in so ambiguous a manner that it was difficult for many of those present to understand the real drift of the propositions before them.

Dr. Comyns Berkeley, the Hon. Medical Secretary having read the notice convening the meeting, the Chairman read several forcible letters protesting against the elimination of the nurses' Direct Representatives.

Miss M. P. Thomson, Matron of the Infirmary, Sunderland, in a letter signed by herself, the Assistant Matron, and a considerable number of nurses, wrote protesting against the unfair representation it was proposed to accord to the nurses, under the Bill, on their governing body.

Miss Sidney Browne, Matron-in-Chief of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, wrote that she had hoped to be present, but as this was impossible, she wished to express her disapprobation of the Re-drafted Bill, which did not meet with the approval of any Matrons or nurses to whom she had spoken. She considered that nurses ought to have the management of their own profession, which should not be governed and controlled by people outside it. The medical men to whom she had spoken did not approve of the Re-drafted Bill, they said that it was a great mistake to suppose that the large majority of the medical profession wished to take the control of nurses into their own hands. Miss Browne also pointed out that the confidence in the Association, which was beginning to be restored since it had again supported Registration, was once again shaken by the propositions contained in the Re-drafted Bill.

Letters were also reported from Miss Kelly (of Dublin), Miss Wilson, Miss Warner, Miss Bartlett, and many others, objecting to the lack of Representa-

tion for nurses. It was significant that not one letter was reported supporting the policy of the Executive Committee.

The Re-drafted Bill was then considered Clause by Clause.

The first amendment proposed was by Miss Mary Burr, who suggested that it should be permissible for a nurse to register at twenty-one, instead of twenty-four. This was seconded by Miss Forrest, but lost. In regard to the provision for existing nurses, Miss Burr, seconded by Miss Wortabet, objected to the introduction of the two years' standard, she also wished to safeguard the interests of the nurses by requiring all who are enrolled to produce evidence of training satisfactory to the Board, as well as evidence of having practised as a trained nurse.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, seconded by Miss Edla Wortabet, objected to nurses being registered on producing testimonials of efficiency from three medical men. To pass this would be to place in the hands of the medical profession the power of putting on the Register women practising as nurses who had had no training. She contended that each woman registered during the period of grace should either produce a three years' certificate of training, or give evidence of training satisfactory to the Board.

Miss Garland Tilt and others also spoke as to the futility of medical testimonials as references.

When put to the vote this amendment was declared lost.

### THE GOVERNING BODY.

The real fight, however, centred round the propositions as to the composition of the Central Board. Ostensibly to bring it into conformity with the recommendations of the Select Committee, six out of the seven representatives placed by desire of the Association in the last Bill, had been deleted. This course of action, which was indefensible from every point of view, might have been more plausible had it not been proposed, as Mrs. Bedford Fenwick pointed out, to give seats to nine medical practitioners, in place of three in the former Bill.

Then came the discussion of the Clauses. Miss F. Anstice, seconded by Miss Ambler-Jones, proposed that the representative of the Royal British Nurses' Association on the Central Board should be a nurse. Dr. Comyns Berkeley thought in all probability a nurse would be appointed, but that the members should have the opportunity of electing a medical practitioner if they liked. A nurse member had been appointed in the case of the Midwives' Board.

Miss Burr pointed out that the representative appointed on to the Midwives' Board was not a midwife. A Nurses' Association could only be adequately represented by a registered nurse. On being put to the vote the words "that representative to be a nurse" were added to Sub-section 3 by 34 votes to 19.

Miss Forrest, Bournemouth, then moved an amendment with special reference to the Clause depriving the nurses of direct representation. Miss Forrest said that the representation of Matrons and nurses proposed in the re-drafted Clause 4 was a wholly insufficient proportion, considering that the Bill was exclusively concerned with the nursing profession, and would regulate the issue of certificates, conditions

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