

ableness. We asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to receive a deputation of trained nurses; we were refused a hearing. We drew up explanatory memos and petitions; we proffered amendments to the Bill. The former, no doubt, fluttered into the waste paper basket, the latter were all "kangarooed" in the House of Commons. We were told that trained nurses as such did not exist, and what was non-existent could not, of course, be included in an Act of Parliament! Also it was intimated to us: "There is no money to pay for your services, so run away, little girl, and be quiet." We do not feel justified in acting upon that advice, because we know that unless the best skilled nursing is available for insured persons as an addition to Medical Benefit, the scheme for Medical Benefit is going to break down just where it will be of the greatest comfort to the sick, and of most economic value to Approved Insurance Societies. You cannot remove one-third of a circle and keep its charm inviolable. A National Health Act should re-act as a Prevention of Sickness Act, and it should demand and establish a high standard of national health. This is not done by administering pills and potions or any other remedy. The very fact that remedial agents are required is a proof of health impaired. A primary necessity in the prevention of mental and physical debility is sound instruction of the people in the laws of health, and just here comes in your highly trained nurse as a force potent for good. She comes into intimate personal touch with people of all classes. She is your health missionary and handy woman. She must have sound knowledge of the laws of sanitation and hygiene; she must be an expert dietitian before she can teach the people the truth about food values and instruct them how to nourish the body. She must understand the care of infants, so that she may teach the mothers how to conserve their own health, and that of their children. All these duties come within the scope of the modern trained nurse, as well as the skilled care of the sick.

A nurse for the sick is not the primary need of Insurance Societies—preventive nursing is their greatest economic asset. Miss Florence Nightingale laid down the principle more than 50 years ago that "nursing the well" is even more important than nursing the sick, preventive hygiene than curative medicine; and it is because I believe this to be a business proposition, that I venture to emphasise its importance to this Conference.

We must realise just here that thorough education is expensive, and that time and money must be abundantly expended in attaining fine skill. A great army of efficient Insurance Nurses, qualified for their responsible work, to assist in the prevention and cure of disease, and to alleviate suffering, cannot be produced at the rate of remuneration now paid to those who look after the sick poor in their own homes. But we need no make-shift in this connection. What is required is a tested and highly efficient instrument, and a fair price must be paid for it. I am

not of those who believe in patching and botching. The cry that an efficient Nursing Service for the insured cannot be procured, that women cannot be got for the work, is usually the cry of those who are not prepared to pay adequately for high-class work done by women. The labour market, as we all know, is very largely governed by "spot cash." Very little "spot cash" is available for highly skilled nursing. Let the community realise its value, and call upon the State to standardise trained nursing by passing a Nurses' Registration Act, and then pay justly for it.

To sum up. I put before you the following business proposition:—

(1)—Skilled nursing is essential to the efficient working of the National Insurance Act, and Nursing Benefit should be added to those already provided.

(2)—Such skilled work cannot be cheap without injustice to the worker. It is therefore the duty of the State to realise its economic value, and to provide adequate funds for Nursing Benefit, so that by the co-ordination of sanitation, medicine, and nursing, the National Insurance Act may evolve into a Health Act for the comfort and well-being of the community at large.

The result of the Conference was the adoption of the following resolution:—

"This Conference urges the Government to introduce a scheme for Nursing Benefit in the next Insurance Act Amendment Bill so as to provide an adequate Nursing Service for all insured persons."

A Standing Committee of twelve persons (of which your President was one), with power to add to their number, was appointed by the Conference to consider arrangements. Thus the whirligig of time brings round its own revenges. This Standing Committee has before it very important national work to consider how, through sound teaching in preventive methods, to decrease sickness, and through highly trained service to save much suffering. Let us hope the nursing advocated will be the highest standard possible, and that the State will provide the money.

Moreover, this Council is to be congratulated that, through it, we nurses have now the opportunity of expressing an opinion on the standard of nursing necessary for the efficient nursing of insured persons; and incidentally of keeping an eye on the economic interests of our profession, so often sacrificed from a false sense of economy.

The Resolution passed at the National Conference was then unanimously endorsed with acclamation. \_\_\_\_\_

The last subject discussed at the meeting was "The Status of the Trained Nurse in the British Red Cross Society," which we shall report next week.

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