

STATEMENT prepared by the President of the National Council of Trained Nurses, and submitted to the Director-General, Army Medical Service, at the War Office.

I.—THE STANDARD OF NURSING.

The present organization of the nursing of sick and wounded soldiers in Military Auxiliary Hospitals, at home and abroad, is in the opinion of the National Council of Trained Nurses defective because the system and standard of nursing countenanced in them differs essentially from that defined as requisite by the War Office for the regular Military Hospitals, and the Territorial Hospitals.

In these hospitals Matrons, Sisters, and Staff Nurses are required to be trained for three years, and certificated, in recognised adult hospitals before being eligible for appointment, and the principle is accepted that nursing is an essential part of medical treatment, indispensable to the efficient care of the sick.

The needs of a sick and wounded man whether he is admitted to a regular hospital, or to an auxiliary hospital are the same. Yet no standard of nursing is defined and enforced for these auxiliary hospitals, and it not unfrequently happens that the "nursing" is provided by members of Voluntary Aid Detachments, "covered" by one or two trained nurses, under the administration of an untrained and inexperienced Commandant, and the service provided under these conditions cannot be considered either adequate or skilled.

The reason for this unjustifiable system may be found in the composition of the bodies controlling the regular and auxiliary organizations.

II.—ORGANIZATION.

In connection with the Military and Territorial Force Nursing Services the War Office has in the first instance, the advantage of the advice of a Nursing Board, upon which the opinion of the nursing profession is available through the Matrons of large civil training schools.

In the case of the Territorial Hospitals, the War Office has formed an Advisory Board which also comprises Matrons of large Nurse-Training Schools. In each instance, by means of these Nursing Boards, an adequate standard of nursing for sick soldiers has been defined and enforced.

When we come to the organization of Voluntary Aid, although the War Office deputed the British Red Cross Society as the only official channel through which voluntary aid could be rendered to the sick and wounded, in time of war, this sound principle of including nursing experts on its Committees has been disregarded. The Executive Committee is composed of twelve men. Upon the Voluntary Aid Advisory Sub-Committee, appointed by the Executive Committee, again there is not one representative of the nursing profession, though there are a few ladies representative of the aristocracy of various counties of England and Wales.

On the Council of the British Red Cross Society there is not one past or present Matron of a Nurse Training School.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the standard required of the Voluntary Aid Detachments is inadequate, that discipline is ineffective, and the Voluntary Aid Detachments, which under effective professional supervision and direction could provide the necessary material, are totally unfit to assume the care of sick and wounded soldiers.

The first fundamental reason therefore why the National Council of Trained Nurses disapproves of the present organization of the nursing of sick and wounded soldiers in Military Auxiliary Hospitals, is that the British Red Cross Society in working out the War Office Scheme, for the organization of Voluntary Aid Detachments, has deliberately excluded from its counsels women possessing the necessary knowledge, and has preferred to enlist the help of persons of wealth and social position, whose services though valuable in regard to the general purposes of raising funds and stimulating interest in the Society's objects, are not only useless but dangerous when they assume professional knowledge which they do not possess, and interfere with the educational and economic conditions of a skilled profession of women to which they do not belong.

The deficiencies of the British Red Cross Society in relation to the organization of trained nursing, have on several occasions been brought to its notice by professional associations of nurses.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)