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EDITORIAL.

NURSING GRANTS.

It will be remembered that, under the Finance Act last year, the Chancellor of the Exchequer apportioned a considerable sum for a nursing grant.

The question of the authority to administer the grant, of course, immediately arose. The County Councils' Association, and the Association of Municipal Corporations claimed that the County Councils were the right authority, through their Public Health Committees, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer had consented to receive a deputation from these bodies, but owing to the War crisis was prevented, and the Government decided that grants in connection with tuberculosis work, and for nursing, should be administered by the Insurance Committees.

The County Councils' Association argues in relation to nursing, with considerable reason, "that the grant being a National grant, intended for general nursing of all classes of the people in need of it, it would be unjust and inexpedient to give it to a body which could only deal with a certain proportion of the population, namely, the insured, and where so agreed, their dependents," and that "there are many persons not insured, because unemployed, whose needs are more urgent than is the case with those belonging to the insured class."

So far we are in complete agreement with the members of the Executive Council of the Association, who have prepared a statement on the subject, as it is hopeful that, even now, the Chancellor of the Exchequer may be willing to hear the cases of the local authorities, who are vitally interested in the setting up of a new organization for dealing with the health of the people.

But when we consider the claim of the Association that this National grant for general nursing should be handed over to the County Councils for administration, then it is at once apparent that the proposition is an extremely dangerous one. While it might be quite feasible if there were a State-recognized minimum qualification for nurses, as there is for medical practitioners and midwives, at the present time it would mean that these bodies which have no qualifications for judging what is a safe standard of nursing, would be given the power to determine this standard. Already, in so far as they do so, they have proved in many instances their lack of judgment. It is true that the standard of three years training required by the London County Council for its school nurses is a sound one, but many County Councils constantly appoint as school nurses women who may be midwives, health visitors, or sanitary inspectors, but who have no nursing qualification, and further, County Councils largely subsidize the training of women by County Nursing Associations, a training which is totally inadequate.

Yet it is seriously proposed, as one reason alleged for not giving the grant to the County Councils was that "they had no statutory power to establish a nursing system," that "the difficulty could be met by paying the grant to the County and County Borough Councils for distribution to any public or private organizations carrying out a system of nursing in their areas, under proper conditions as to public representation and control," the whole being under the authority of the Local Government Board; and the County Nursing Associations and the Cottage Benefit Nursing Association are apparently considered suitable recipients.

The dangerously inadequate standards maintained by the latter Association are so

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