

The British College of Nurses, Ltd.

A MEETING of the Council of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., was held on Friday, January 21st, 1949, at 19, Queen's Gate, S.W.7, at 2.30 p.m.

The President, Miss Helena McLoughlin was in the Chair.

Prayers having been read by the Secretary, the minutes of the last meeting were confirmed.

Business Arising Out of the Minutes.

It was reported that at the special meeting of the Council held on November 19th, 1948 they discussed the debate in the House of Lords which took place on November 9th, *re* the Majority and Minority Reports of the Working Party on the recruitment and training of nurses. It was unanimously agreed that a letter of protest be sent to the Minister of Health, the Right Hon. Aneurin Bevan, M.P., in the following terms:—

THE BRITISH COLLEGE OF NURSES, LTD.

December 7th, 1948.

THE RIGHT HON. ANEURIN BEVAN, M.P.,
MINISTER OF HEALTH.

SIR,—At a recent Meeting of the Council of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., it was unanimously agreed to communicate with you, as Minister of Health, to protest against the insidious campaign of many months, purporting to lay the blame for the shortage of nurses on Hospital Matrons and Ward Sisters.

Concerning this unjustifiable propaganda, the Council views with alarm, that when on November 9th, Lord Crook spoke in the House of Lords on the shortage of nurses, he categorically supported the Minority Report (to the exclusion of the Majority Report on the Recruitment and Training of Nurses), a document giving the opinion of one person, who in his recommendations is antagonistic to the authority and professional status deputed to Hospital Matrons and Ward Sisters, and whose report, it is understood, is largely compiled on the evidence of some hundreds of anonymous letters from unsuccessful nurse aspirants, criticising these officers.

Lord Crook's indictment that "The shortage would continue while there were Matrons and Ward Sisters who passed on hard strict rules," the Council considers is calculated to foster this misleading and unjust censure which moved Lord Shepherd to promise a new authority to organise the training of nurses, and which my Council feels is most disquieting.

The Council of this College, therefore, earnestly craves that the Minister, in justice, will not permit of any undermining of the authority or professional status of these officers, where a certain amount of discipline must be obeyed for the smooth conduct of the hospital.

I am, Sir, Yours faithfully,

ALICE STEWART BRYSON, *Hon. Secretary.*

The Council expressed much satisfaction on receiving the Minister's courteous reply:—

MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

December 14th, 1948.

MADAM,—I am directed by the Minister of Health to refer to your letter of 7th instant and to say that he is well aware of the need to maintain proper discipline in the hospital service and recognises the importance of upholding the professional status and authority of Matrons and Ward Sisters. He has recently drawn the attention of Hospital Management Committees and Boards of Governors to these

matters in the Notes for the Guidance of Hospital Management Committees, a copy of which is enclosed (see in particular Section IIB of the "Notes" and paragraph 11 of Appendix I of the annexed pamphlet "Staffing the Hospital").

I am, Madam,

Your obedient servant,

Section IIB to which the Minister refers reads:—
"The Matron carries full responsibility for the Nursing of the patients and for the entire Nursing Staff. She should report directly to the appropriate committee on the matters for which she is responsible and should have direct access to the Management Committee (or in an emergency to the Chairman) when necessary."

A communication was received from Sir Waldron Smithers, J.P., M.P., expressing active interest and support in this connection.

THE GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND AND WALES.

The Council of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., views with alarm the proposed changes in the Council's existing procedure, i.e., the proposal to discontinue to issue printed copies of the Register of Nurses.

In opposing this ill-advised policy, inimical to the Nurses' interests, the following letter was forwarded to the Chairman and members of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales on December 20th, 1948.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—In reference to the Conference convened by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, held on Tuesday last, December 14th,

"To consider proposed changes in certain of the Council's existing procedure,"

as the short notice given of this Conference had afforded the majority of those representatives present no opportunity of receiving instructions from their organisations on this important issue, I am, therefore, after consultation with my President and Council, instructed to ask that their considered opinion be placed before the next meeting of the Council of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales.

The Council of the British College of Nurses Ltd., strongly protests against the proposal of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales to abandon the publication of the State Register of Nurses, and is of the opinion that the present members of the General Nursing Council will by such action stand for ever condemned in having relinquished this fundamental privilege and right of Registered Nurses granted to them by Act of Parliament.

In order to meet the alarming deficit in the expenditure of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, my Council is of opinion that economy should not be sought in approaching Parliament to annul the provisions of the Nurses' Act, but in drastic economy in the Council's spending of the nurses' contributions for the maintenance of their Professional Status, fought for and won by the passing of the Nurses Registration Act, 1919.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen, Yours faithfully,

ALICE STEWART BRYSON,
Hon. Secretary.

To which the Registrar, Miss M. Henry, replied:—

THE GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND AND WALES.

December 23rd, 1948.

DEAR MADAM,—I have to acknowledge your letter of December 20th, which was placed before my Council at its meeting yesterday.

I was instructed to point out to you that there is no question of the Council's ceasing to maintain the Register. The proposal in this connection is only to discontinue

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