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WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

ETHEL GORDON FENWICK, S.R.N., HON. EDITOR 1888—1947.

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Editorial.

“Those whom the Gods would Destroy, they first make *Blind*.”

WHEN the movement for the State Registration of Trained Nurses first emerged, it was the conception of the pioneers to obtain for nurses: (1) Legal status through Act of Parliament; (2) A one portal system of entry to the State Register; (3) An independent Council (Governing Body composed of nurses only); and (4) A State Register of Nurses to be printed, published and placed on sale, so that nurses would be free to govern their own affairs.

When, however, after their thirty years' struggle, the Nurses Registration Act, 1919 was passed, these conditions of the Constitution were acceded to, but when Ethel Gordon Fenwick, the leading pioneer of State Registration of Nurses, quickly realised the significance of the fact that persons other than nurses were to be included on the Statutory Body then being set up (now the General Nursing Council for England and Wales), she pressed for a clear, free majority of seats thereon for nurses.

Consequently, a Council of twenty-five members was formed consisting of five persons appointed by the Minister of Health, two persons appointed by the Privy Council, two persons appointed by the Board of Education, and sixteen persons registered as nurses, every one of these Registered Nurses being elected by Registered Nurses, and none of them appointed by other bodies, Government or otherwise.

The Nurses Act, 1949.

Turning now to the new Constitution of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales under the Nurses Act, 1949, in which the personnel of the Council is increased to thirty-four members. As we interpret the Act, there are seventeen freely elected nurses and seventeen appointed “persons”—of the appointed persons there are twelve to be appointed by the Minister of Health, three by the Minister of Education, and two by the Privy Council.

In our opinion, the Registered Nurses included in the twelve persons appointed by the Minister of Health will not, presumably, be regarded as free agents to give their allegiance to freely elected nurses through their own registration professional vote, but will be subject to the direction of the Minister whatever his policy may be at the time.

Therefore, the conclusion we draw from a final study of the Act as it now stands on the point of their professional representation is, that nurses lose their clear free majority of nine seats on the Council over all other

persons, a majority so necessary when matters of vital importance are at stake, and which was their prerogative under the original 1919 Act.

The State Register of Nurses.

That, by Act of Parliament, thousands of Registered Nurses are denied the printing, publishing and placing on sale of their State Register, recommended by the General Nursing Council and acceded to by the Minister on the plea of economy, when the retention fee of 2s. 6d. per annum, received from Registered Nurses, exceeded the estimated cost, shows a complete indifference to professional status, and destroys, to a certain extent, the possibility of combined action against what they regard as being prejudicial in any action taken by the Council.

Well remembering the valiant fight of the pioneers for State Registration, that nurses should have the established right of a printed and published State Register, the Council of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., as the following correspondence shows, pleaded that Parliament would not permit this derogatory step.

February 5th, 1949.

To—

The Right Hon. Aneurin Bevan, M.P.,
Minister of Health.

Dear Sir,

re The State Register of Nurses.

The British College of Nurses, Ltd., an association of State Registered Nurses, strongly objects to the proposed discontinuance of the publication of the State Register of Nurses. We understand that this is being put forward by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales to meet some of the deficit of their overhead expenses, and feel sure that you will agree with this College that economy could be practised in a way less detrimental to the status and convenience of State Registered Nurses.

The discontinuance of an up-to-date State Register of Nurses must inevitably deny to Hospital Boards, employers of nurses and other bodies a ready means of ascertaining the nurses' *bona fide* qualifications. In the opinion of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., sufficient copies should be printed to supply public reference libraries, hospital boards, etc.

Thanking you for your kind consideration in our professional matters.

I am,

Your obedient servant,
ALICE STEWART BRYSON,
Hon. Secretary.

to which the Minister replied:—

The Hon. Secretary,
The British College of Nurses, Ltd.

March 1st, 1949.

Madam,

I am directed by the Minister of Health to thank you for

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