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Editorial.

Justice The Solution.

WE PUBLISH IN FULL the following Report by the Standing Nursing Advisory Committee on the position of the enrolled assistant nurse within the National Health Service.

The Committee, whose chairman was Miss K. G. Douglas, S.R.N., S.C.M. (Matron of St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, W.2), discuss in detail the role which they consider the assistant nurse should occupy in the various branches of nursing within the National Health Service, paying special attention to such matters as training, status and title, and promotion prospects.

The Committee's findings regarding mental and mental deficiency nursing are, however, not included. This part of the report has been referred back by the Central Health Services Council for further consideration by the Standing Mental Health and Nursing Advisory Committees. Otherwise, the report has been endorsed by the Council, and the Minister of Health, Mr. Iain Macleod, in sending copies to all hospital and local health authorities has commended it generally to their attention.

Among the main conclusions are:—

1. There should be more careful selection of candidates for training.
2. There is room for controlled experiments in courses of part-time training for admission to the Roll of Assistant Nurses.
3. The relationship between enrolled assistant nurses and student nurses employed in the same wards is best governed by goodwill and careful administration rather than by hard and fast rules about relative seniority.
4. No alteration is recommended at this stage in the title "enrolled assistant nurse."
5. Consideration should be given to a new grade of senior assistant nurse open to an enrolled assistant nurse who has served for a given period in a special field of nursing.
6. An enrolled assistant nurse taking general training should be given every facility to live out if she wishes.

The Committee stress that the assistant nurse should always carry out her work under the supervision of a registered nurse.

Nursing Duties.

Discussing different aspects of nursing, the Committee make these points:—

General Nursing.

Referring to the recommendation in the recent report of the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust of setting up nursing units, the Committee state that, subject to trained nurses taking part and supervising, the assistant nurse should be able to help in the nursing of acutely ill patients within such units.

Chronic Sick.

Experience had proved that there was a considerable place for the enrolled assistant nurse in this field where constant skilled basic nursing care was needed. The growing practice of active rehabilitation should help to provide additional interest, enabling her to carry out, under supervision, remedial exercises and diversional therapy. The Committee also felt that a large proportion of the nursing work of geriatric units could be undertaken by assistant nurses.

Home Nursing.

Wider use of her services in this field, for example with chronic sick patients requiring chiefly basic nursing care, would free the more highly qualified nurse for more acute work.

Training.

The present course of training, followed by a practical assessment of the pupil assistant nurse's work in the ward in which she was working, and the written examination, appeared to be generally satisfactory. However, a high standard would be maintained and wastage during training checked, if there were more careful selection of candidates. On the question of part-time training, mention is made of the review made by the Minister of Labour's National Advisory Council on the Recruitment of Nurses and Midwives, in which the Council suggested that where it could be arranged, part-time training had distinct possibilities and would act as a stimulus to recruiting, not only from the ranks of nursing auxiliaries but also from among women not already engaged in nursing work. The opinions expressed by the professional bodies concerned made it clear, however, that they would have difficulty in accepting the principle of part-time training, chiefly because they considered that the candidate would, by reason of her divided interests and home ties, be unable to give proper attention to her training and would not be ready to do her share of the less popular duties. Nevertheless, the Committee were impressed by the views of the National Advisory Council and by the experience of the Nursing Recruitment Service that many good candidates are lost because they cannot train full-time. Rather than entirely reject a proposal which might aid recruitment, they suggest there is room for controlled experiments for pupils who are prepared to work a minimum of 32 hours a week.

Pointing out that many candidates leave to be married during their second or third year of training, the Committee mention that at present such persons are unable to get the statutory qualification because they cannot undertake a full-time course of training. Part-time facilities for admission to the Roll might be particularly helpful in these cases.

Status and Title.

The assistant nurse's place as an accepted member of the nursing team had been won entirely on her own merits and did not depend on her actual title, which was very rarely used when addressing her. "Nevertheless, it is clear that, rightly or wrongly," say the Committee, "the inclusion of the word 'assistant' in their title is disliked by many assistant

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