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Editorial.

Nursing Organisations.

The Joys and Privileges of "Belonging."

WE ARE STILL—THANK GOD—a free nation. At least we hope we are, and we behave as if we are. Occasionally, but more often than we care for, we get a rude shock when ugly incidents in the public life of the country rear their shameful heads and we are faced with lightning strikes that we cannot comprehend; the causes of which are so obscure and sinister. We hear disturbing rumours of "communists" enslaving the wills of thousands of our countrymen who are banded together in "unions" brought into being to "protect" the workers from their cruel and vicious masters. Soon we shall be faced with "unions for employers" to protect themselves against vicious and cruel workers, which may not be so fantastic as it sounds.

Fortunately, we in the nursing profession are a race set apart from strikes, though not always from exploitation! Because the very nature of our work forbids strike action, and because our work is so demanding on our time and energies, we often find that when our off-duty periods come along, we are too inert and too tired to do any serious thinking for ourselves. Thus we are apt to take the line of least resistance and to drift along comfortably with the tide of public opinion, not in the least bothering where the tide is apt to discharge us. Which is just where the danger lies for many.

Today no one can escape the fact that joint consultation between managers and employees is the only way by which employees can demand a fair wage, fair working conditions and generally fair play all round. By "fair," we mean "just," which cuts both ways—employers must be just and employees must be just also.

Human nature, being what it is, finds justice a difficult bed-fellow, always a stronger personality is tempted to dominate and subjugate a weaker one. In the past, employers of labour have not always paid just wages, nor seen that their employees enjoyed just and fair conditions, nor given sufficient free time in which to recuperate themselves and enjoy a reasonable standard of living. Thus, the workers were compelled to organise themselves in order to demand with safety their just dues.

Nurses and friends of nurses were not slow to seize upon the general agitation to attempt to get better conditions of service for themselves. Senior members of the profession organised themselves into articulate bodies in order to raise the status of the profession, improve its educational possibilities and obtain more

leisure for recreation and a better scale of salaries. This was a great step forward, and today the professional and social status of nurses is the envy of all other women's organisations.

Quite obviously any nurse who values her standing amongst other women, and who wishes for the maintenance of fair and just conditions within her profession should join one of the various professional bodies and become a loyal and solvent member of it. One nurse struggling on her own for better conditions is not going to be very successful—unless she is a Florence Nightingale or an Ethel Gordon Fenwick. But thousands of nurses standing shoulder to shoulder and uniting their energies towards one goal are going to progress very far indeed! Take for example a bundle of sticks. By taking out of the bundle one stick at a time and breaking it across one's knees, one can soon break all the sticks in the bundle! But try breaking the sticks altogether, wired up! The result would be a broken knee!

So now we see that a united body of nurses is a strong and formidable weapon in the hands of the profession, and will go far to produce desired results! But—make no mistake, nurses must be FREE to choose the organisation to which they will ultimately belong. If they are blindly and forcibly prejudiced to join any one organisation rather than another, their "bodies" may join, but their minds and hearts and spirits are not enlisted and they bring no new ideas, no enthusiasm and no energies to enrich their new body. Quite soon they do not even bring their small yearly subscription! So, instead of revitalising and energising, they clog up the means of progress and then drift away altogether and are lost to all organisations. So first—nurses must be helped to make a free choice of where they will devote their talents and energies. It does not appear to us to assist free choice to bring eminent and persuasive professional speakers to talk to young, enthusiastic nurses on the occasion of their prize-givings about one professional organisation only, and entice them to join the one of the speaker's choice! That is corrupt, perverse and proselytising; and altogether despicable and not in accordance with British standards of freedom.

Once a nurse, with free and individual choice, has joined the organisation to which she is most attracted, then she should bend her talents and give all her loyalties to furthering the best interests of that organisation. If she decides to join two, then she cannot be of the slightest use to either and might as well save other people the time and annoyance of having to deal with her. No two organisations can have quite similar ideals and precepts. Allowing that all organisations aim at the highest good for every individual nurse (which is a generous thought),

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