

We have pleasure in publishing some of the correspondence Miss Goodchild has carried on in her endeavour to protect the best interests of the Nursing Profession.

**A Plea to Parliament.**

**AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT.**

*World War 1.*

In the 1914-1918 war, a band of women known as V.A.D.s (Voluntary Aid Department) rendered great service to the hospitals by relieving trained nurses of those duties which could be done by other than qualified people.

*World War 2.*

There were so many ways for women to serve, voluntary and paid, amongst the latter the Civil Nursing Reserve.

These women did good work, and were paid for it at levels approximating closely to salaries paid to nurses at that time.

As the war progressed there were many of these C.N.R. who genuinely wanted to go on helping the sick. Some took their training—others drifted on untrained—some still doing the work because they genuinely liked it—others because it was a reasonably paid occupation.

From this arose many grades:—

- Assistant Nurse
  - Nurse Assistant
  - Auxiliary Nurse
  - Nurse Attendants
  - Nurse Helps
- } etc.

Many upheld the privilege of helping the sick, but many "cashed in" on it, and many people without qualification were classifying themselves as nurses and being paid nurses' salaries.

It was realised by the nursing profession that here was a position opening wide the door to abuse of the confidence of the sick. So the matter was taken in hand by nursing advisers and a Register was opened in trust by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales to ensure a protection to trained nurses and a guarantee of good faith to the sick.

The Assistant Nurses' Bill: With some misgiving many of us watched its laborious stages as it went through Parliament—was it the answer to the problem of supply and demand?

We realised that with new channels of nursing opening to nurses and a diminishing supply of State Registered Nurses something had to be done to ensure that while the skilled jobs were done by the people trained to do them the more domiciliary jobs might well be undertaken by a second grade.

The second reading, particular, published in "Hansard," Vol. 387, No. 45, dated Wednesday, March 24th, 1943, sets out the position clearly:—

*Relevant Discussion.*

"The main objects of the Bill are three—to secure that assistant nurses should be given a recognised status and placed on a roll under the control of the General Nursing Council; to secure also that the public should be protected from unqualified persons representing themselves as nurses; and to this end it is proposed that agencies for the supply of nurses commonly known as 'Nurses' Co-operations,' should be controlled by a system of licensing and inspection."

I would ask every Member of Parliament to re-read the various readings leading to the Act, which clearly indicates that most M.P.s were even then in grave doubt as to whether the Bill was adequate.

And so the Act was passed and became:—

"An Act to provide for the enrolment of Assistant Nurses to the sick, to restrict the use of the name or title of 'Nurse,' to regulate agencies for the supply of nurses for the sick and to amend the Nurses' Act, 1919."

(April 22nd, 1943.)

**FACTS OF TODAY.**

Over the past 12 years it has been clearly seen that the demand and supply have not been balanced, and gradually the service within the hospitals has had to be reinforced by other means.

So Orderlies were introduced into the hospitals; some of these nice women, some educated women, but mostly ex-hospital cleaners—many illiterate and uncouth.

The chronic sick and mental hospitals particularly, though most hospitals in some measure, large or small, in the same plight, to meet a great need, have absorbed this grade, who, with a very sound element of truth say "we are actually doing nursing so why not call us nurses?"

And so, gradually again, has various grades come into being:—

- Nursing Assistants
  - Nursing Attendants
  - Nursing Auxiliaries
  - Nursing Helps
- } etc.

According to the Royal College of Nursing there are some 25,000 people known under these headings.

I need not emphasise the prevailing conditions in many hospitals (particularly mental and chronic sick) with their unwieldy blocks unmanageable in terms of numbers. Slowly—insidiously—over the last 12 to 15 years conditions of the Pre-Nightingale era have been returning.

Can we hope to recruit nurses of the right type to train when the completely untrained are offered practically the same salaries and precisely the same conditions of service?

When will the country face the fact that we have become a 48-hour week nation—two days and two nights a week in our world of sickness where illness goes on for seven days and seven nights a week—five more days and nights to be serviced.

At one end of life is death reducing the numbers—at the other—birth, multiplying it. The balance of life and death remains fairly consistent, but the balance of service has become out of focus.

And so the Nursing advisers have advised the Minister to legalise an existing illegal procedure:—

The Ministry instruction contained in N.M.C. No. 44 has agreed to remuneration and conditions of service of "Nursing Auxiliaries."

*Definition:*

"A Nursing Auxiliary is a Person who is engaged wholly or mainly on nursing duties in a hospital, other than a mental hospital, or a mental deficiency institution, who has no recognised nursing or midwifery qualification and who is not a student nurse, a pupil midwife, or a Pupil Assistant Nurse."

May I say, in conclusion, Sir, that it is still the earnest wish of every true nurse that the lamp lighted by Florence Nightingale will not go out.

(Signed) G. G. GOODCHILD,  
Matron of the Christie Hospital, and  
Holt Radium Institute.

The following reply was received by Miss Goodchild:—  
Ministry of Health,

London, W.1.  
June 20th, 1955.

Dear Madam,

Your letter of May 21st addressed to the Prime Minister has been referred to the Minister of Health who desires me to say that it would appear that you have misunderstood the object of N.M.C. No. 44. It has been necessary for many years past to employ in the hospitals large numbers of nursing staff who have no professional qualification and are not in training for such qualification.

This situation is not new but existed before the institution of the National Health Service and even before the date of the Nurses' Act, 1943.

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