

assumed the power of doing that which Parliament had distinctly said ought not to be done. He would point out that if such a power did exist, some Treasurer might impose very impossible and arbitrary conditions on charitable Institutions. Mr. Godfrey said the deputation would like to know whether Mr. Brett, the Inspector-General, had expressed any opinion on this subject, with which he was thoroughly acquainted, and what was the nature of his report. In conclusion, the speaker pointed out that the position of the Nurses had improved enormously during the past few years. They received a splendid training, which qualified them for the work of Nursing the sick outside the Hospitals, but if the condition relating to hours was insisted upon their training would be interfered with largely. Mr. Godfrey hoped that the Treasurer would give consideration to the points he had enumerated, and grant the prayer of the petition.

Mr. R. L. J. Ellery, president of the Alfred Hospital, said that some years ago there was some question of the hours of Nurses, and then alterations were made in their hours on duty, and in their hours for recreation. The hours were reduced to nine hours on an average. Some were on duty eight and a half hours, and some ten hours, but they had longer hours of recreation. Those longer worked were simply on duty, and it was light work. In London the average hours were eleven and a half. Of course, the Institutions could reduce their beds by 20 per cent., and so reduce their expenditure.

The Premier: Do your Nurses work more than 168 hours in 21 days.

Mr. Ellery: I think they do a little. Yes, they do.

Mr. W. Madden, as hon. treasurer of the Women's Hospital, deprecated the importation of politics into the charitable Institutions, and said that in another colony such a course had been disastrous to the Institutions. He observed that the Women's Hospital was in an exceptional position, as it was the only Hospital of its kind in the colony, and its Nurses received a training that enabled them afterwards to do most useful work for the outside public. The cost of the change to the Institution would be £1,400 in the first year, and, with a falling revenue, this would be most serious to the Institution. That was principally for accommodation, but there would afterwards be still a greatly enhanced cost. The Nurses seemed to think it unnecessary to reduce their hours, and they feared that, as they would not get the same advantage from the training and lectures, it would be a disadvantage rather than an advantage, although they would like the reduced hours if it could be done. He read a report from the Committee of the Women's Hospital, setting forth the steps which had been taken to ameliorate the condition of the Nurses, and the desire of the Committee to do so as far as possible within the resources of the Institution. A liberal grant would be necessary to give effect to the alterations for additional quarters. He read a return showing the hours of duty for Nurses in the Women's Hospital, and urged that they were not so long, and that a good deal of time was occupied in simply sitting in the wards, and being able to do sewing, or occupying themselves otherwise. While the Women's Hospital had been so well managed in the past, and the Nurses did not desire the alteration, he submitted that it was not required.

Rev. J. K. Macmillan (president of the Hamilton Hospital) stated that, so far as he knew, the country

Institutions were not prepared to fall in with the new arrangement proposed. It was extraordinary that, after forty years, a condition of the kind mentioned should be attached to the Government grant. A reason for a change should be based entirely on a complaint or complaints, and as there was none, he could not see why this should be done. The Nurses were not overworked. If there were times when the Hospitals were full, and the Nurses tolerably busy, it must be remembered that there were also times when the number of patients was smaller, and the work considerably less. The various committees were at present occupied in providing the necessary sums for the maintenance of their Institutions, and could not, on their present incomes, provide for the additional Nurses which would be necessary under the new condition.

Mrs. Tester (president of the Children's Hospital) endorsed the remarks of previous speakers, and said that the average working hours of the Nurses were ten and a quarter hours per day. Mrs. Nicholson, of the same Institution, stated that the Nurses preferred to take charge of a patient throughout the period of illness, which would render it difficult to comply with the condition.

Pastor Herlitz and Cr. Strong (Mayor of Melbourne), representing the Austin Hospital, endorsed the remarks of previous speakers.

Mr. F. R. Godfrey added that the average working hours of the Nurses at the Melbourne Hospital were ten and a half hours a day.

Mr. M. Holt, representative of the Benevolent Asylum, said that his Committee was inclined to regard Nurses in the light of domestic servants, and if the Government was going to get eight hours for Nurses it should also do something for domestic servants.

Mr. Ross, M.L.A., representative of the Kyneton Hospital, claimed that the views of those people who were working for the poor and sick should obtain before the views of those who were concerned about the sweating in large factories. The speaker believed in the eight hours' principle, and was opposed to any kind of sweating, but it had never been shown that there was any sweating in connection with Hospitals. The hours worked in the Kyneton Hospital averaged ten and three-quarters per day.

Miss Farquharson, Matron of the Melbourne Hospital, repeated what Mr. Godfrey had stated about the hours worked by the Nurses in that Institution, and said that a happier and more contented set of women could not be found anywhere. She (the speaker) had given the Nurses an opportunity, had, indeed, suggested to them that they might hold a meeting to consider this eight hours matter, but they had decided amongst themselves that they did not want the eight hours. They only wanted to be left alone.

The Premier said that the matter originated in Parliament some twelve or eighteen months ago as to the hours Nurses worked, principally in the Melbourne Hospital. He promised to inquire and found that the Nurses worked ten, twelve, and fifteen and a half hours. The Government did not deal with the matter then, hoping to bring in a Charities Bill, but when the Factories Bill came in a clause was inserted on the basis of the Alfred Hospital custom. It seemed that the Nurses worked 172 hours in three weeks in some Institutions, and it did not appear that there would be any great difficulty in making arrange-

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