

determine the amount of the subscriptions to be paid by members." In other words, the Bye-Law settled the subscriptions, and these could not, therefore, be changed without the sanction of the Privy Council. Yet, in the same breath, the Bye-Law proposed that its provisions might be changed merely by a General Meeting, which was impossible under the Charter. He, therefore, proposed, and Dr. Hugh Woods seconded, that Bye-Law 9 be not adopted.

The resolution, on being put to the Meeting, was not carried.

The Hon. Medical Secretary said that many of those assembled had come from a great distance, and although they were anxious that full discussion should be allowed, they would like to settle their business that night.

Dr. WOODS said the most important point they had before them was the re-modelling of the Executive Committee. As he came on the Executive Committee *ex-officio*, he was quite independent. He pointed out that it was a deliberate breach of faith on the part of the officials to propose to remove from the Executive of the Royal British Nurses' Association the President of the Incorporated Medical Practitioners' Association, and the President of the British Medical Association, who had been promised permanent *ex-officio* seats on that body.

Miss BREAY: Those of us who are acquainted with the "true inwardness" of the history of this Association, cannot affect surprise at the proposals made to us to-day. We have already broken the pledges made to the *ex-officio* matrons upon the Council; it is not surprising, therefore, that our Hon. Officers think that we may be persuaded to break faith with the *ex-officio* matrons upon the Executive Committee, and with the Presidents of the Medical Associations who were invited to take permanent seats upon that Committee, but there is this difference in the position. When the matrons were removed from the Council we were taken suddenly by surprise. If we pass the Bye-Law now before us, we shall deliberately break the pledges given by this Association when it was started, and the only possible reason we can offer for our justification, is one which, when the history of this Association comes to be written, will not redound to the credit of the nurses of to-day. It will be that the promises were not made in legal form, and over a sixpenny stamp, because, presumably, these ladies and gentlemen thought that they were dealing with honourable people. (Hear hear.)

We are further asked to remove from the Bye-Laws, and from the Executive Committee, the name of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, the founder of this Association. (Loud applause. No! no!) It is an open secret that this is one of the chief ends the officials desire to be attained by the revision of the Bye-Laws. More than a year ago it was said to me by the Matron of an important hospital, "When are they going to revise the Bye-Laws; they will do it you know. They are determined to get rid of Mrs. Fenwick." I think we have a right to know why we are asked to do this, and I should like to ask Mr. Fardon the reasons which the sub-committee for the revision of the Bye-Laws have to lay before us, for I suppose we may presume that the Committee has reasons for asking us to commit this breach of faith with, and this act of gross ingratitude towards, the founder of the Association. (Much disturbance.) The members of this Association must well understand that in removing the *ex-officio* matrons from the

Executive Committee, they are removing the chief safeguards of their own interests. Setting aside the fact that we cannot act dishonourably without the result of our action recoiling upon our own heads, I ask to whom can we look to protect our interests in the Executive Committee, if the leading matrons have not seats upon it of which they cannot be deprived even if they do their duty. We know the efforts which have been made to get rid of those matrons who have had the courage of their opinions in times past. (Much disturbance.)

I ask, how are the nurses represented in this Corporation of nurses upon the platform to-day? We see only one matron on that platform, and she is a lady whose vote and influence is naturally at the disposal of her *fellow* Hon. Officers. (Much disturbance.) I believe I am right in saying that with this one exception every matron who took part in the formation of this Association, always excepting Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, has ceased to take an active interest in it, and it is because Mrs. Bedford Fenwick has safeguarded our interests, and has not allowed the fact that she has been insulted, misrepresented, and maligned to prevent her from fulfilling what she holds to be her duty to her profession, that it is thought by the officials to be necessary to frame new Bye-Laws, removing her name from the Executive Committee. (Great uproar, during which the Chairman refused to allow Miss Breay to continue. She, therefore, handed the rest of her written speech to the reporters. It was as follows): I repeat that because they have been unable to insult Mrs. Bedford Fenwick off our Executive Committee the Hon. Officers ask us to-day to remove her name from the Bye-Laws. Do the nurse members of the Association intend to sanction this wrong? I cannot believe it. Those members who have come here to-day to support a party will, of course, support that party irrespective of anything that may be said, but those who have come with an open mind to discuss these Bye-Laws, and to act as may seem to them right will, I think, be agreed that it would be dishonourable, unsafe, and contrary to the best interests of nurses to remove from their *ex-officio* seats on the Executive Committee those matrons who at present hold them, and I ask these members to record their votes against this Bye-Law, the very suggestion of which is an insult to honourable and self-respecting women. I, at any rate, have cleared my conscience by protesting against it.

After further stormy discussion, Sir James Crichton Browne moved the closure, which was seconded by Sir Charles Brown, and Dr. Hugh Woods moved, as an amendment to this, "That the consideration of these Bye-Laws should be deferred *sine die*."

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK, in seconding this, read the existing Bye-Law, showing that every new Bye-Law must be formally proposed and seconded, that this had not been done, and that the proceedings, therefore, were not in accordance with the Bye-Laws, and that, moreover, it would not be in order to carry the remaining Bye-Laws *en bloc* as suggested.

The CHAIRMAN asked the Meeting whether they desired to hear Dr. Fenwick at any further length, and declared the negative carried. He then put the resolution as to the closure, and declared that carried. He then asked the Meeting to adopt the remaining Bye-Laws *en bloc*, and declared them carried.

Dr. FENWICK demanded that the names of those who voted for and against that Resolution should be

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)