

scheme is primarily one affecting the government of the Nursing Profession, it is essentially one on which Matrons and nurses have a right to be heard; but I think the lay public has also a *locus standi*, because when Registration comes it is important that it should be effective, and it is more than doubtful if any voluntary association could give the required status, or command the allegiance of the majority of trained nurses.

But when we study the constitution of the proposed Society for Promoting the Higher Education and Training of Nurses, it is even still more doubtful if it would satisfy a small minority of a profession which has been completely banished from representation, the members of which are treated like the troublesome reformer in an old-time country.

In one sense the project may be welcomed as another indication of the widespread feeling that it is necessary that something should be done, but if we are to progress, it is important not only that we should go forward, but that we should do so in the right direction. The present time is a critical one, for if we now make a wrong choice instead of a right one, we may find ourselves in a blind alley.

On first reading the objects of the Society we might imagine it affords a short cut to the desired end, that some persons have come down from Olympus and swept aside all difficulties. Further study of the document modifies this opinion.

It is worthy of note that the authors of the scheme have kept modestly in the background, for the signatories to the Memorandum are well-known financiers, and it is scarcely conceivable that the Nursing Question should suddenly have become so acute at the Bank of England as to cause the drafting of this document. It is further rumoured that its promoters, until recently, might have been found in the anti-registration camp. It is, however, with the proposals of the scheme that we alone have to deal.

There are three bodies concerned. One, the Council may be said to be the predominant partner. It is provided that this Council shall have the right to create and fill vacancies, to remove troublesome members, and it also reserves to itself the right to transact business in its own absence, which sounds rather a Hibernian proceeding. It is this remarkable Council, with remarkable powers, which desires to become all-powerful over the profession of nursing, with the right to withdraw certificates, with the effect, of course, of causing professional ruin to the nurses concerned.

There is also a Consultative Board, the office of which is to give advice, which apparently it is not incumbent on the Council to accept, and there is an Examination Board; the members of both of these Boards being appointed by the Council.

No doubt amongst those appointed we might find the names of doctors or nurses holding honourable positions; but they are in no sense the representatives of the profession,

and this form of government is completely foreign to our ideas of what is right and just. Again, it is hardly the proper time, while a Select Committee of the House of Commons is sitting to inquire into the question of Registration, to propose a new scheme. When the Report of this Committee is presented to the House, then will be the time to further legislation which will protect the nurse from illegitimate competition and the public from incompetent nurses.

The first Resolution was then proposed by Miss Isla Stewart, President of the Matrons' Council and of the League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses. It was as follows:—

“That this meeting of Hospital Matrons and Trained Nurses emphatically protests against the attempt now being made by seven gentlemen in the City of London to obtain the License of the Board of Trade to incorporate a Society which seeks for authority to organise the professional education of Trained Nurses, to exercise disciplinary powers, and to control their work.

“This meeting is strongly of opinion that no such powers can be usefully or successfully exercised except by a Body composed of professional persons upon which Trained Nurses have direct and sufficient representation.”

Miss Stewart reviewed the Registration position, and showed the progress made of recent years, culminating in the introduction of two Bills into the House of Commons last Session, and the appointment of a Select Committee. Suddenly there was a rumour of the formation of a voluntary Society, formed by people in opposition to State Registration. About three weeks ago she was invited to join this Society, not as representing anything or anybody, but as a unit. On looking through the draft Constitution, she found she could not do so for various reasons. It was plain that the Society intended to create an autocracy by which nurses would be governed; they would have no power of governing themselves. Next Registration of Trained Nurses ought to be by Act of Parliament, and no other scheme was adequate or would meet our difficulties. The signatories to the scheme were gentlemen eminent in finance and philanthropy. But nurses had very little to do with finance, and philanthropy had very little to do with nurses. Lastly, while the question was under the consideration of Parliament any other scheme, if not premature, was at least indiscreet.

Miss Mollett, President of the Royal South Hants Nurses' League, seconded the resolution. She said that, as a nurse, she not unnaturally looked at the question from a nurse's point of view. All true nurses were anxious to have their status and position defined, and the British public certainly desired to know what really it was to call a trained nurse, and then have done with the many and wearisome discussions about her, and to leave her to manage her own affairs. Everybody was agreed that “something must be done”; the question was, who was to do it, and what was to be done? One

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)