

## Nurses and the National Insurance Bill.

As usual, the large body of trained nurses who, as wage earners, should take an intelligent interest in legislation, because it is sure to affect them sooner or later, are standing aside and allowing those who will to take action or not, to improve the provisions of the National Insurance Bill. What a demon is apathy!

During the past week the Chairman of the Nurses' Committee has received a very courteous reply to their request for an interview from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, while regretting his inability to find time to receive a deputation of Hospital Nurses, invited an expression of their opinion on the clauses of the Bill which they desired to discuss with him.

The Committee, therefore, met on Saturday last and drafted and adopted a memorandum which has been forwarded to the Chancellor for his consideration, in the hope that the suggestions therein contained may be adopted and materially improve the position of trained nurses, which is likely to be greatly affected in various directions should the Bill become law.

Since our last issue deputation after deputation has waited on the Chancellor, and although the interests of trained nurses have not been presented by experts, they have been touched upon incidentally.

The deputation organised by the National Union of Women Workers, lumping professional nurses, with domestic servants and shop girls, asked that they might be placed in the same position under the Bill as other workers, but no demand for professional representation on Health and other Committees, on which the knowledge of trained nurses would be invaluable to the sick community, was advanced. One more proof that only an expert can present the just claims of any class of workers.

On July 25th Mr. Lloyd George received deputations from the British Hospitals Association, the Central Hospital Council for London, and the Hospital Saturday Fund. Their anticipation of injury by the Insurance Bill was forcibly presented. The Hon. Sydney Holland asked if the nurses and servants—(we wonder

if they had given their consent to the request)—who at the London Hospital were treated free when ill could be exempted from the scope of the scheme, which would mean an additional cost of £850 a year to the hospital—(a very infinitesimal part of the profit made out of the work of the private nursing staff!)

In his reply Mr. Lloyd George, whilst disagreeing with the opinion of the deputation in many particulars, said: "I am considering whether, in certain cases, the sick-pay of a person who is charged upon a hospital shall not in some form or another be subscribed to the hospital itself. With regard to Mr. Holland's proposals, I am in a position to meet him. Where a hospital undertakes to pay wages to a nurse during the time she is ill—within a limit—and also in addition it is prepared to undertake medical attendance upon her there, the Government are prepared to reduce the charge by the amount of the sick-pay. That, I think, will be a reduction of 2d. a week."

In reply to Mr. Holland's inquiry if the arrangement would apply to all employees, the Chancellor replied:—

"Yes, to all with whom there is a form of contract—(pupil nurses, we presume). We have to insure them because after they pass out of your hands they may break down when they are old, and if they were not in the scheme they would have to fall on parish relief."

The exact wording and provisions of the amendment to be proposed by Mr. Lloyd George dealing with this very intricate matter will be awaited with interest.

Our advice to nurses is: Do not be contracted out of the Bill, but use your intelligence to get and maintain the best possible terms of insurance for the members of your profession and the sick public under the Act. Are Scottish and Irish Nurses moving in the matter? We hope so. Please remember this Insurance Bill is a measure for the improvement of national health—not merely a matter of cash—and every nurse has therefore, apart from her own interests, a professional interest in its decrees. The Nurses' Committee in London approve:—(1) That women should be on all organising authorities—as Insurance Commissioners, on the Advisory Committee, and that Trained Nurses should be placed on the local Health Committees, where their knowledge of social service would be invaluable.

(2) That women on marriage should be eligible, as voluntary contributors, or that

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