

to-day finds itself in an invidious position, matrons and nurses at large should not blame anything but their own selfishness that a National Health Bill has passed its third reading—a Bill, mind you, in which "nursing" is promised to millions of poor insured people—*without mention being made of "trained" nurses in any one of its 109 clauses!*

The indisputable facts which nurses must take to heart are that, not being "persons," they have no rights of citizenship, and, not being "registered," they have no legal status, and therefore no professional existence in the National Health Scheme. And having said this much, let us splash no more ink in vain regrets, but set to work and demand recognition of our humanity by Parliamentary enfranchisement, and our professional enfranchisement will follow as a matter of course.

Here we are a class of well-trained, educated women, inspired with a keen sense of devotion to our work—especially in relation to the class of fellow-creatures included in this Invalidity Bill—and we are deprived of the power to help them as we alone know how. We have pleaded for representation on the administrative bodies, and that a "nurse" should be defined statutorily. Nothing has been granted, "trained" nurses have been ignored.

Let the Commissioners pass; we are thankful one is a woman, though of nursing she probably knows nothing. Take the Advisory Committee: on this body nurses have pleaded for representation, so that the expert advice of a fully trained nurse should be available when the educational standards and economic conditions of nurses to be employed are considered, knowing as they do that these matters will be most important factors in dealing with questions which will arise when the Act comes into operation.

By omitting to provide that a fully trained nurse shall have a seat on this Advisory Committee, it leaves it to chance whether experienced professional advice is available or not. The same happy-go-lucky system is possible in the formation of the Local Health Committees, which bodies are empowered to provide "nursing."

Trained nurses want to know what standard of nursing it is proposed to supply. We want to know who is capable of defining that standard—if no expert advice is forthcoming from the Advisory Committee. We want to know if the State is to be called upon to blindly subsidise cheap, inefficient, unstandardised nursing as one of the "benefits" promised in the Bill?

If so, are the subscriptions of "trained" nurses going to be compulsorily expended in providing quack nursing for the poor? If the poor accept such nursing as a charity as at present, little can be done; but we claim that when the State steps in and promises and pays for "nursing," it should take means to guarantee that its quality is safe and sound, and not promise "bread" and through ignorance offer a "stone." Thus here we are up face to face with State Registration of Trained Nurses.

We claim that not one penny from the Imperial Exchequer should be expended on "nursing" until "nursing" has been defined statutorily and the interests of the sick and the nurses assured.

There is only one way to effect this. The Government must pass the Nurses' Registration Bill early next session, before the National Insurance Bill comes into force.

A REGISTRATION DEMONSTRATION.

There is absolutely no hope of any sort of security, social or professional, for trained nurses, nor for the patients they serve, without State protection; and the intolerant self-interest of those hospital governors and the members of their medical and nursing staffs, who have for a quarter of a century opposed just educational conditions and legal status for trained nurses, must be blamed primarily for the despicable position in which trained nurses find themselves to-day.

We use the word primarily because there has also been a sad lack of professional conscience and public spirit upon the part of thousands of certificated nurses who have considered their own self-interest during the registration campaign before the interests of the profession as a whole. It is high time they realised that their attitude of selfish isolation is reacting upon them individually in the most injurious manner, as recent legislation proves.

We propose, therefore, that early in the new year we hold a public Registration Demonstration in London, supported by every society in favour of the Organization of Trained Nursing by the State. Let us appeal to the public, whose very good servants we are, and with their support let us urge the Government to pass the Nurses' Registration Bill at the earliest possible date.

The organization of nursing by the State is not a party question. It is a human question of vital importance to the nation's health, and commands the warm sympathy of the best men in every Party.

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