

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,249

SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 1912.

Vol. XLVIII

EDITORIAL.

NURSES AND NATIONAL INSURANCE.

With very few exceptions trained nurses are bitterly opposed to the compulsory contribution under the National Insurance Act, as will be found by discussing the matter with them. But until pressure can be brought on Parliament to amend the Act, arrangements must be made to make the best of it.

The profession in this connection owes a debt of gratitude to Miss Mollett and the Matrons who, during the passage of the Act through Parliament, did all in their power to improve the conditions for nurses under its provisions.

Failing the slightest help upon the part of either medical or women's unions, or interest in the needs of trained nurses under the Act, the only result of legislation is that, with other workers, nurses must pay up when it comes into force next July, although as "trained" nurses their work is ignored entirely in this National Health Act.

The Royal National Pension Fund—which did absolutely nothing to try to get the position of nurses amended under the Act, and is reported to have used its influence to get the Bill so amended as to make it possible for outsiders to manage their affairs—is quite ready to manage their State subsidies for them—work which it would have been much better it should encourage the profession to do for itself. But this is just what men are determined working women shall not do—manage their own finances.

At first the Pension Fund Scheme was to include men, and the nurses were told (the majority believe far too much what they are told) that in a conjoint society of men and women the women would be more detrimental to the men's interest than the men to the women's. This statement of course was not true, and when contested

by the Nurses' Protection Committee, the Pension Fund officials hastily altered their arguments, and urgently assured the profession that no men would be admitted to participation in their scheme. So far so good—but now we learn that ward-maids are to be included in the Nurses' National Insurance Society. Why? Trained nurses, as we have pointed out to them before, want to escape contributing to the maternity benefit—which few will require as, if they marry at all, they marry into a class whose income is usually above £2 a week; whereas the majority of ward-maids, if they marry, need the maternity benefit.

As these are points on which the official organ of the Pension Fund has maintained a studious silence, we hope the Matrons who have accepted seats on the "Advisory Committee" (why not Executive Committee) will save the nurses they advise to insure, from this and similar pitfalls.

We note that the lay nursing press objects to the appeal of professional nurses in the press for funds to meet the financial strain resulting from an Act, which disfranchised women are compelled to support without being consulted.

For our part we think nurses are being penalized enough, without paying for the organization of legislation they thoroughly dislike; and it would be interesting to know who is paying for the circularizing of thousands of nurses, and institutions, from the Pension Fund Office, and the *stamped* post cards sent out for reply with the appeal.

Is this being paid for out of the nurses' premiums—or from the profits made out of them—or by public subscription? Any way, if the lay nursing press could inform the profession of how this enormous output of literature from the National Pension Fund Offices is being financed, it would be giving more useful information than it usually provides.

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