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EDITORIAL.

BETWEEN TWO STOOLS.

The trained nurses of the United Kingdom hold a dual position under the National Insurance Act. In the first place it compels them to insure for benefits which they already receive as a free gift, on far more liberal terms than those which they will gain as insured persons.

They are the only class of women workers, owing to their association with the medical profession, who are liberally provided for in sickness, and they stand to lose instead of gain by the passing of the Act.

Secondly, a vast amount of arduous work for the insured sick will have to be done under the Act, and it is the nurses who will have to carry it out. That they are (1) compelled to insure; and (2) will have to do the nursing work, are both sufficient reasons to gain for them direct representation on the Advisory Committees. Taken together they form the most cogent argument which can be advanced that trained nurses more than any other class of workers will be intimately affected by the Act, and are entitled to the representation which has been granted to every other class of women whose interests are similarly concerned, and yet, in spite of this, they are excluded.

It is not possible for the Commissioners to advance any argument which can convince trained nurses that their exclusion is just, or that because they have nominated three ladies to seats on the English Advisory Committees, who are the officials of a charity which provides the poor with care in sickness, that they are giving independent representation to the nursing profession at large.

Like all charitable institutions the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute has cut its coat

according to its cloth, but when nursing is supplied to the sick in connection with a State subsidized Service, such as that which must arise under the National Insurance Act, it is the duty of the Commissioners to provide that none but fully qualified workers are employed, as is the case with medical practitioners, midwives, and pharmacists, and to protect the sick from the consequences of their own ignorance of the necessary standards.

Unless the Nursing Service under the Insurance Act is to be a farce and a delusion, so far as the sick for whom it is responsible are concerned, it must make provision for the employment of thoroughly trained nurses, and also that their remuneration shall be a living wage, and thus prevent the State making itself responsible for the employment of the ignorant and insufficiently trained woman, at the present standard of remuneration, which is every day extending a system of sweated labour where the nursing of the sick poor is concerned.

It is because humane and intelligent women, of which the nursing profession is largely composed, desire to see the helpless sick skilfully nursed, and the work of trained nurses justly remunerated, that they have all along claimed that their honourable profession should be directly represented upon the Advisory Committees appointed under the Act.

English and Irish nurses have as much right to such representation as their Scottish colleagues, whose claims have been wisely recognized by the Scottish Insurance Commissioners, and unless they are granted by the Commissioners in England and Ireland nurses will conclude that they have been excluded from representation because they are to be exploited.

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