

In a third communication to the Chancellor the committee asked that the word "trained" might be inserted in the Bill before the word "nurse," and that a fully trained nurse might be placed upon the Central Advisory Committee. These views were also placed before the Prime Minister, and many influential politicians; and the chairman of the Nurses' Protection Committee (Mrs. Fenwick) spent much time in the House of Commons urging these reforms upon members of Parliament.

An endeavour was made by the Right Hon. R. C. Munro Ferguson, M.P., who interested himself in the nursing question in the kindest manner, to have amendments considered dealing with these points, but this was prevented by the wholesale use of the closure, by which none but Government amendments were considered.

After the passing of the Act copies of the petitions were sent to Sir Robert Morant, the Chairman of the Commission, to which has been given very wide powers in interpreting its provisions.

The fact remained, however, that under the Act as passed "trained" nursing was unrecognised, and that it was not included as part of the medical benefits, though no greater benefit for the welfare of the insured, both from the preventive and curative points of view, could have been adopted to raise the standard of the national health.

The Commissioners have power to include a trained nurse on the Advisory Committee, and such expert advice is necessary, because, while the local insurance committees will be restricted in the employment of medical practitioners and midwives to those possessing legal qualifications, there is no such restriction possible, whilst trained nurses have no legal status (State Registration), and therefore committees of lay persons will be unable to define a standard of nursing if they have no guidance from the Insurance Commissioners, and no expert advice locally to assist them.

Mrs. Fenwick said £10 had been subscribed, which had so far covered the cost of the great amount of publicity given to this important question by the work of the officers of the Nurses' Protection Committee, but the fact remained that trained nurses, deprived as they are of the rightful protection of statutory registration, had little power to protect either the standard of their indispensable work, or their own economic condition in connection with legislation.

The Nurses' Protection Committee had the one satisfaction of knowing that this very urgent matter of nursing under the National

Insurance Act had not been permitted to go by default, as it otherwise would have done, as nursing interests had been entirely ignored by those assuming to deal with women's interests as a whole under the Act.

The only result of the National Insurance Act as far as trained nurses were concerned, was; that they were compelled to pay, whether they wanted to do so or not, and they were present to listen to suggestions from Miss Mollett as to obtaining the best possible return for their contributions.

Mrs. Fenwick then invited Miss Mollett to present her address.

MISS MOLLETT'S ADDRESS.

We are not here to-night to discuss the wisdom or the folly of the already much-discussed Insurance Act—whether universal compulsory insurance is one step in the direction of the millenium, or a great many steps in the direction of national bankruptcy. Those of you who, like myself, subscribe to an ultra-Radical and ultra-Conservative newspaper, have already been told, with that fervent unanimity which marks the grand and logical male mind, that it is both. It is left to our individual common-sense to accept either statement, or steer a middle course.

There is one point, however, I should like to emphasize: It is unfair to regard the Insurance Act solely as a freak suddenly sprung upon the country. Whatever its faults, it is only a logical outcome of much legislation that has been going on for the last fifty years. I repeat what I said once before. It has become the accepted maxim of modern Government to tax the wealth of a nation heavily, to provide the benefits of civilization for those who are unable or unwilling to provide them for themselves; also that Government has the right to force people for their own good to accept such benefits, whether they do or do not desire them. This is, however, the first time for many years that a portion of the taxation has been directly placed on the working classes. That part of the Act is a novel experiment.

Whether it will be found a workable measure I cannot say—much depends upon the spirit in which it is accepted—much depends upon the medical profession. So far they have not received it with open arms, or unstinted praise. But, whatever its merits or demerits, the Act has passed both Houses of Parliament, and must be accepted and prepared for as the law of the land. I need only touch upon the general scope of the Act—as I am sure the majority of you are acquainted with those clauses that affect our profession.

Briefly, the Insurance Act orders the compulsory insurance of all adult *employed* persons over sixteen years of age, whose incomes are below £160—and of all manual labourers, men, women and children, whatever their incomes may be.

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