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## EDITORIAL.

### THE REGISTRATION OF NURSING HOMES.

The fact that the London County Council has decided to seek powers next year from Parliament to register and inspect maternity homes, and that at its meeting on November 11th it will consider the promotion of legislation for the control of nursing homes, and establishments where massage, manicure, or electrical treatment are carried on, in London, should put proprietors of nursing homes on the alert lest under a "General Purposes" Bill of the London County Council legislation intimately affecting their work is enacted, before they are aware that it is being proposed, in a form which is detrimental to it.

That legislation is necessary most trained Superintendents of private nursing homes are ready to admit, the evils of the present want of supervision are too rampant and too flagrant. But legislation must be well considered, and doctors and nurses versed in the professional side of the question must be consulted, or we may again be faced with ill-considered and disastrous legislation such as that enacted some three years ago when the London County Council obtained powers requiring all employment agencies to take out an annual licence, powers admittedly sought to restrain and suppress bogus and immoral domestic and theatrical agencies, but which included the control of every private nursing co-operation, thus compelling such professional co-operations to submit to control by an unprofessional authority, and the possibility of having their licences revoked annually, or to evade the Act by re-organizing as the employees of a professional committee. This, in our opinion, is the lesser evil of the two, but the Act was a cruel blow to the right of the professional woman worker to co-operate with others for their mutual advantage, to take their own earnings, and

manage their own affairs, paying into a common fund a sufficient percentage to pay for their secretarial and office expenses.

The proposed registration of lying-in homes is without doubt suggested in order to deal effectively with the homes of unsavoury reputation, and there is danger lest the professional interests of well managed homes are overlooked.

That there is urgent need in the interests of the sick public for the supervision of nursing homes we are well aware, but the inspectors must include not only medical practitioners, but trained nurses if it is not to fail in its object.

The standard defined in Australia, where registration is carried out by the professional Associations of Nurses should be noted. No home may be registered unless the Superintendent is herself a registered nurse and employs a staff of registered nurses, and in consequence the public are assured of having that for which they pay, *i.e.*, skilled nursing.

In this country they have no such guarantee, for the fact that nursing homes, which are the product of the last quarter of a century, have met a real need, has induced the speculator to invest in them, and as the proprietors and Superintendents of such homes need have no professional qualification, in addition to many which are well conducted, there are numbers throughout the metropolis where the extremity of the patient is the speculator's opportunity, where though the fees charged are excessive the accommodation and catering are poor, and where there is no professional standard or supervision. Moreover, also, the greedy speculator endeavours to increase the profits by charging the patient for skilled nursing, at the same time taking so called probationers and charging them fees for teaching them nursing. Other so called nursing homes are merely a cloak for vice, and should be dealt with by the police.

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