

MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK (President of the National Council of Trained Nurses, of Great Britain and Ireland), claimed that, for the maintenance of a high standard of health in civilized communities, the human atom must be encircled by a trinity of effort—preventive hygiene, preventive and curative medicine, preventive and curative nursing—all one and indivisible, making the perfect circle, and each of which had its own indispensable function, in preserving wholeness and soundness of body and mind. She claimed that any organized scheme for compulsory insurance should, therefore, have incorporated and provided, for these benefits, and, had expert knowledge been sought, carefully digested and adapted, a great and beneficent scheme for the upbuilding and preservation of the national health might have been evolved. It was because no such far-seeing statesmanship went to the making of the National Insurance Act that the present Conference was taking place to discuss a missing arc in the sanitary circle. She showed that when the Bill was first published, and it was found that *trained* nursing was not even mentioned in its provisions that nurses hoped to rectify this omission by sweet reasonableness. They asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to receive a deputation of trained nurses but were refused a hearing, and their amendments to the Bill were kangarooed in the House of Commons.

A National Health Act should re-act as a Prevention of Sickness Act, and a primary necessity in the prevention of mental and physical debility was sound instruction of the people in the laws of health. It was here that the highly trained nurse was a force potent for good. As Miss Florence Nightingale laid down more than fifty years ago, "nursing the well" was even more important than nursing the sick, preventive hygiene than curative medicine. But we must realize that thorough education was expensive, and that time and money must be abundantly expended in attaining fine skill. A great army of efficient Insurance Nurses could not be produced at the rate of remuneration now paid to those who look after the sick poor in their own homes. Let the community realize the value of highly skilled nursing, and call upon the State to standardize it by a Registration Act, and pay justly for it.

Mrs. Fenwick concluded with the following business proposition:—

(1) Skilled nursing is essential to the efficient working of the National Insurance Act, and Nursing Benefit should be added to those already provided.

(2) Such skilled work cannot be cheap without injustice to the worker. It is therefore the duty of the State to realize its economic value, and to provide adequate funds for Nursing Benefit, so that by the co-ordination of sanitation, medicine and nursing, the National Insurance Act may evolve into a Health Act for the comfort and well-being of the community at large.

The following resolution was then moved by

Councillor A. White (member of the Coventry Insurance Committee).

RESOLUTION.

"This Conference urges the Government to introduce a scheme for 'Nursing Benefit' in the next Insurance Act Amendment Bill, so as to provide an adequate nursing service for all insured persons, in the same way that Medical Benefit is at present provided."

COUNCILLOR WHITE said that everyone was fully satisfied that the funds for the upkeep of Nursing Associations were inadequate, and that, till some scheme was evolved, insured persons could not have the attention they had a right to expect. It had come under his own notice that, if proper nursing had been available, the suffering of insured patients might have been mitigated. He also pointed out that there were 23,000 Approved Societies, and thousands of nursing institutions. Who was to do the bargaining? He thought it should be left to the Insurance Committees to make the necessary arrangements and that funds should be provided in part by means of an Exchequer grant, and in part by the Approved Societies.

MR. ALBAN GORDON (Domestic Servants' Insurance Society, and a Member of the London Insurance Committee), whose name appeared on the Agenda as seconding the Resolution, said that the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute had previously given notice of an amendment to the Resolution. He therefore proposed the following compromise resolution, which was accepted by Councillor White:—

COMPROMISE RESOLUTION.

"This Conference urges the Government to introduce a scheme for Nursing Benefit in the next Insurance Act Amendment Bill, so as to make adequate provision for the nursing of all insured persons in their own homes, and it represents to the Government that the Insurance Committees, which at present arrange for the medical treatment of all insured persons, and for the nursing of tuberculosis cases, should be the bodies charged with administering the scheme."

Mr. Gordon said that the need for trained nurses for the insured had been so emphasised in the last year that to support it in such an audience was practically preaching to the converted. The operation of trained nursing would be to reduce the duration and incidence of sickness.

MR. R. J. DAVIES (Co-operative Employees Union) said that he had come with instructions (with one amendment) to vote for the resolution on the Agenda, and had no power to vote for that now substituted. (This was endorsed by other delegates.) He therefore proposed the original resolution as an amendment, omitting the words "in the same way that Medical Benefit is at present provided." The approved societies were, he said, going to have some nursing scheme.

This was seconded by Mr. A. Bispham (National Society of Operative Printers), who said it was absolutely necessary to have trained nursing.

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