

KING EDWARD'S HOSPITAL FUND FOR LONDON, AND THE USE OF CHARITABLE FUNDS.

In their long struggle for legal status, and the protection of the public in sickness from exploitation by the unfit, the Nursing Profession in this country has spent thousands of pounds during the last quarter of a century—hard earned money saved from very inadequate salaries, which has meant great personal self-denial in hundreds of instances. The more honour to them. When, however, it came to their knowledge that the Central Hospital Council for London—a small coterie of men, through social influence, and a perverted press, had taken power to finance their opposition to organization of trained nursing by the State, by using the Charitable Funds of the constituent hospitals represented by members of the committees and medical staffs, on the Council, a deep sense of outraged justice was felt. The Nurses considered, and rightly, that men who employ them and who oppose their protection by the State should finance their interested opposition out of their own pockets—as Nurses have financed their appeal—and not out of the subscriptions of the charitable public; many of them women who sympathise with the nurses' demand for organization.

Under these circumstances the following resolution was passed unanimously at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses in July last, and forwarded to the Secretary of King Edward's Hospital Fund for London:—

The Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, in annual meeting assembled, begs to draw the attention of the Council of King Edward's Hospital Fund for London to the following provision in the constitution of the Central Hospital Council for London, that "The constituent hospitals shall be invited to contribute equally to the annual expenses," and requests it to take such action thereon as shall restrict in future, to their legitimate use, the expenditure of charitable funds, by hospital committees receiving grants from the King's Fund.

It desires further to point out that the work in which the Central Hospital Council for London is actively engaged is its organised opposition to the State Registration of Trained Nurses, that nurses have themselves financed, for the last quarter of a century, the movement for their Registration by the State, and that it is most unjust that hospital committees, which are opposing a reform unanimously recommended by a Select Committee of the House of Commons, and approved by the House of Lords, should take power to utilise the contributions of the charitable to support their reactionary policy, in connection with the education and status of trained nurses.

Dated the 15th December, 1913, the Hon. Secretary, Miss M. Breay, received the following letter from Mr. H. R. Maynard, the Secretary to King Edward's Hospital Fund:—

DEAR MADAM,—The resolution enclosed with your letter of the 24th July was laid before the General Council of the Fund at their last meeting, and I am directed to inform you that the Council decided to take no action thereon.

Miss Breay acknowledged this communication, and requested that as the Council had made its decision upon a report from the Executive Committee, a copy of the report might be sent to her; otherwise her Committee would be kept in ignorance of the reasons upon which the Council based its decision.

To this letter she received a reply from the Secretary informing her that "the proceedings of the Governors and General Council, except in so far as they are published in the official report, are confidential," and that she could not be supplied with a copy of the Report of the Executive Committee.

Miss Breay then wrote on December 22nd last asking for a copy of the official report referred to, and received a reply that "the official report referred to was that sent to the press on the evening of the day of the Council Meeting," and that there were no further copies for distribution!

The following is the meagre reference to this question of principle in the report of the Annual Meeting of the Governors and General Council of the King's Fund, held at St. James' Palace on December 12th:—

"On the motion of Mr. Sydney, seconded by Sir John Tweedy, a report of the Executive Committee on a resolution received from the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses was adopted."

REMARKS.

How typical of the manner in which men treat women workers!

Had the resolution drafted by the nurses objecting to this quite indefensible use of charitable funds been passed by men with votes would it have been referred to a committee of men, several of whom are members of the Central Hospital Council for London, the Hon. Sydney Holland amongst them, whose conduct was impugned, and would the report of the accused, advising that no action be taken, have been accepted as impartial by the Council of King Edward's Hospital Fund for London?

Why, of course not. Quite another course would have been pursued.

Imagine the righteous indignation evinced to a man, had it been proved (as the nurses can prove their case from the accounts of the constituent hospitals) that one single penny—perhaps the poor dear widow's mite—had been diverted from the sacred cause of charity, to finance the political animus of an outside Body, which had had the audacity to draft a Bill in support, say, of the State Control of Voluntary Hospitals! Imagine the milk-white integrity with which the Council of the King's Fund would have sought restitution of that diverted coin!

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