

THE ASSOCIATION OF APPROVED SOCIETIES.

THE SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

The Second Annual Conference of the Association of Approved Societies was held at the Central Hall, Westminster, on Friday, March 6th. The President, Mr. Charles Bathurst, M.P., presided. The following draft outline scheme for nursing insured persons was explained by Sir Victor Horsley, F.R.C.S., F.R.S., and received:—

DRAFT OUTLINE SCHEME FOR THE PROVISION OF NURSING TO INSURED PERSONS.

INTRODUCTION.

The Sub-Committee appointed to prepare a scheme for the Standing Joint Committee have given careful consideration to the question, upon what principles should provision be made for nursing persons insured under the National Insurance Act, 1911.

Although of the first importance in the care of the sick, the provision of nursing has always been regarded as secondary, and, except in severe cases, non-essential in practice. As a factor in the speedy and more certain recovery of the sick person, however, its place is now better understood, and it is being rapidly recognised that the insured person loses a proportion of the benefit of the doctor's attendance unless that is supplemented by the services of a trained person.

The immediate result of the provision of nursing will be a notable shortening of the duration of treatment. Consequently the insured person will be greatly assisted and at the same time the insurance funds will be relieved by a correspondingly lessened demand for sick pay. A further beneficial result, and one directly contributory to the recovery of the sick person, will be the assistance given to the home care and comforts of the insured person by reason of the relief afforded to his wife and dependants through the services of the nurse.

ADMINISTRATION.

Inasmuch as nursing attendance on a sick insured person is an essential part of medical treatment, it follows that it forms a natural part of the medical benefit. The administration, therefore, of sick nursing will naturally be by and through the Insurance Committees, or whatever bodies are from time to time charged with the administration of Medical Benefit.

If this is determined upon, the nursing profession should be directly represented on the Insurance Committee, as well as nursing Associations which undertake the work.

FINANCE.

At the present time the medical benefit is furnished on a financial basis, which, in the opinion

of the Committee, cannot carry any further service. It follows that a special financial provision must be made for the Nursing Benefit.

Such provision can only be made either by the Approved Societies or by Parliament. It is clear that many Approved Societies would be unable to contemplate as yet the provision of any additional benefit such as nursing, nor indeed could such a question be fairly raised in any case until after the first triennial valuation.

On the other hand, the need for Nursing Benefit is very urgent, and such provision for assistance by Approved Societies to Nursing Associations as is permitted under Section 21 of the National Insurance Act, 1911, not only does not meet the requirements of the case, but also could only be made by few Societies. The terms of the Section legalise, however, the procedure of administration through the Insurance Committees as outlined above and it now only remains to consider the provision of financial assistance by Parliament to such procedure.

The proposition is that with moneys provided under Section 1 of the National Insurance Act, 1913, the National Insurance Commission should set up a Special Nursing Fund comparable in constitution and administration to the Special Mileage Fund. This latter was instituted by the Government, in order to make the Medical Benefit complete and adequate.

It cannot be contested that the same need exists in the present case, and therefore that Parliament should give financial aid to Nursing.

Finally, it may be pointed out that such finance and procedure of a Special Nursing Fund would secure not only a frictionless utilisation of existing Associations and Machinery, but would above all provide that the help thus afforded by the State would reach the poorest insured person and the less wealthy members of the Approved Societies.

INJUSTICE TO WOMEN.

The following resolution:—

"To protest against the provision in the National Insurance Act 1913, which places the responsibility for the payment of the Maternity Benefit, which should be paid to the woman by her husband's Society, on her own Society, in the event of the insufficiency of his contributions or on account of his arrears, as being unjust, actuarially unsound and a direct incentive to the husband to neglect to keep up his payments, and calls for the amendment of the Act by the deletion of this provision,"

was proposed by Miss Florence, Secretary of the Women Clerks' and Secretaries' Friendly Society, and seconded by Miss B. Kent, of the Trained Women Nurses' Friendly Society. It was supported by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, and was passed unanimously.

Other business of much importance to Approved Societies and insured persons was transacted.

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