

7,666 off duty and holiday hours, or practically she had one hour on duty to seven off.

After referring to the report recently issued by Dr. Cuff, principal medical officer to the Metropolitan Asylums Board on the shortage of nurses in the service, Mr. Ward urged, *from the religious standpoint*, that, in connection with the exaction of a seven days' working day from nurses, expediency and economy came first, right and principle a poor second. But, from the broader basis, was it right that any person should be compelled to work the round of the week? Could it be urged for a moment that we were entitled to impose such conditions of service upon others? Many had contended "No" for years, and now the premier assembly of the nation—Parliament—had agreed to the principle, and recently in the case of the police, granted the one day's rest in seven. From an ethical point of view we had no right to work the nurse seven days a week.

Mr. Ward's second point was that it was wrong *from a health point of view* to work nurses seven days a week. Why should the life of a nurse be considered a bad one by the insurance world? He believed the answer to be because of her unnatural conditions of service. One would expect the life of a person dealing with sickness, and trained to know how to prevent infection to be rather *above* the "good" than below. The conditions of service must therefore be responsible for the Insurance Companies' precaution. No one could keep "fit" who through the week engaged in the same class of work, or even play. Work became a drudgery under such conditions. It was no longer a pleasure. You could not keep fit for long if the mind, or the body, were taxed the week through without a definite break.

From an economic standpoint the rest day was advisable. This might seem an unusual point to raise, as the financial aspect of the extra time off was usually the one which killed the proposal. Nevertheless true economy did not always mean the saving of a few pounds, and it was possible for a human life to be worth more than rates. At West Ham they estimated that they would require twenty-two more nurses if each nurse had a full day's rest per week, two hours off each week day, and three hours on Sunday, and the additional cost was about £20 a week, which the ratepayers were willing to pay, it was the Local Government Board which blocked the way.

It was sometimes urged that the nurses themselves had not demanded a weekly rest day. Perhaps it was as well that they did not know their own strength. The speaker said he was not anxious to act the rôle of a trade union leader, and usually found himself in opposition to their agitations, but if ever there was need for some one to lead and speak on behalf of "unorganized labour" surely it was in the case of the nurse. An employer did not always neglect to grant a good employee better conditions because he had not demanded them. Some employers considered it their duty to think of their employees.

Hitherto the public had relied for their nurses

on the natural impulse inherent in some ladies to devote themselves to nursing, irrespective of the conditions of service, but the number of these girls was a diminishing quantity. Conditions of life were such as to discourage self-sacrifice, and the finer virtues of humanity were dwarfed in the fierce struggle of the twentieth century. The majority were compelled to enter other branches of service wherein the monetary return was more immediate.

It therefore behoved the guardians of this country employing no less than 9,000 probationers or nurses to recognize this fact, and to make the conditions of service as encouraging and attractive as possible. An easy way of helping to do this was to grant them "the inestimable boon of one day's rest in seven."

Miss Dowbiggin expressed the opinion that 50 hours per week on duty should be aimed at.

Miss Plaaussen, P.L.G., said she had been very much struck with the work done by nurses, but she did not feel that the Local Government Board was the only difficulty, they must think of the ratepayers. More definite information was wanted on many points.

A question was also raised as to if, and why, insurance companies asked a higher premium from nurses, and another point mentioned was that the extra nurses were not the only consideration, most infirmary committees would have to build in order to provide the necessary accommodation for them.

In reply Mr. Ward said that if you were going to give more hours off you might as well give a whole day a week as reduce the daily average, the question was entirely one of administration.

In regard to insurance a nurse had to come on a higher table than a teacher.

As to buildings, the Local Government Board did not in the least mind sanctioning building. It was when it was a question of increasing the nursing staff that objections were raised. The Board had sanctioned such an increase of buildings at West Ham, that even if they obtained all the nurses for whom they were asking they would not be able to fill the rooms.

LIVING OUT,

Miss Lucy E. Ashby, the reader of the next paper, advocated a system of living out for nurses, putting forward her proposition as one of the remedies for the present grave shortage of nurses. She thought that a system which would enable the nurse to live away from the scene of her labour, and to get into daily contact with people engaged in other professions would enable her to keep in touch with current events. We were told that nurses could talk nothing but shop; and, speaking generally, the statement was true, and no wonder. Matrons themselves asked for women of liberal education and wide outlook, but very soon this wide outlook became narrower and narrower. A woman who spent practically every minute of her life in hospital could not reasonably be expected to talk anything but shop. She claimed

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