

Mrs. Fenwick said that it was seven years since the Council had passed, at Aberdeen, the resolution they were now invited to re-affirm. Since then much progress had been made. The House of Lords had passed a Nurses' Registration Bill without a division having been taken at any stage, and three Bills dealing with the question had, after consideration and consultation between their promoters, been consolidated, and the present Bill drafted.

Last year the Nurses' Registration Bill, introduced into the House of Commons under the ten minutes' rule, had been read a first time, with a majority of 228, but in spite of this enormous majority its supporters had not yet been able to persuade the Prime Minister to give time for a second reading.

During the quarter of a century in which the question had been under consideration in this country, a registration law had, of course, been passed in Germany, and in South Africa, New Zealand, in Canadian and Australasian States, and in forty-two of the American States. There was unanimous evidence that registration had proved of great advantage in raising educational standards. Why should British nurses, who had led the way in excellence, have to wait longer for their professional enfranchisement, which they so well deserved?

At this particular crisis the work of trained nurses was invaluable; indeed, she did not think the war could have gone on without it. She urged the Council, therefore, to approve the Resolution, and to re-affirm its previous decision.

Lastly, every nurse had a mother, and it was that mother's duty to see that the conditions under which her daughter worked were just. At present both the educational and economic conditions in relation to nursing were unjust. She hoped they would record their vote in favour of legislation which would secure legal status for trained nurses, and enable them to perform their duty under just conditions.

Mrs. George Cadbury seconded the Resolution in the interests of the public. It was incredible that a Bill for the Registration of Trained Nurses was not yet on the Statute Book. If nursing had been a man's profession, nurses would have been registered long ago. Besides passing the Resolution, she thought members of the Council should make known the principles of the Bill, and the wishes of its promoters. Hitherto they had not been sufficiently emphatic or persistent.

Miss Shuter, Matron of Ivanhoe Nursing Home, Dublin (trained at St. Thomas' Hospital), said that all nurses were not in favour of

registration. The large training schools were not in favour. When they were, others would not hold back, as then they would get the real ideas they wanted for the scheme. The Bill was not acceptable in its present form, so that support was impossible even from those who would be glad to get progress of some kind.

Miss Herbert, Matron of the General Infirmary, Worcester (trained at St. Thomas' Hospital), also opposed the Resolution. The Bill was not supported by the training schools, and such a Bill should be drawn on the widest basis by those fully conversant with the question. The definition of standards should precede legislation.

In reply, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick said that the last speaker had given the impression that the Bill was not drafted by experts. On the contrary, it was drafted by experts from England, Scotland, and Ireland, and was the considered opinion of the trained nurses' organizations and of the medical profession. It had been conclusively proved that, without the majesty of the law behind it, no efficient standard of nursing education could be enforced.

The President then called the time limit of the Session, and in doing so said that she should not have allowed Miss Shuter to speak, as she was not a delegate.

It was unfortunate that the quarter of an hour, which was all that could be given to the subject, did not permit of speeches from such able delegates and staunch friends of the Registration Cause as Miss Mollett, Miss Huxley, and Miss Gill, R.R.C., but, as the President remarked, the question had been discussed before, and she supposed most of those present had made up their minds about it.

The Resolution was carried by a very large majority, only some half-dozen persons voting against it.

The occasion was noteworthy for the widespread support accorded to the Resolution, as printed on the agenda, from the branches and affiliated societies, including such organizations as the Women's Social Work Departments of the Church Army and the Salvation Army, and the Women's Auxiliary of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches.

Secondly, for the fact that those who, in the interests of certain committees of nurse training schools (*i.e.*, lay employers of nursing labour) spoke in opposition to the Resolution, no longer opposed the principle of registration, but restricted their opposition to objections to the provisions of the present Nurses' Registration Bill.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)