

## THE NURSES' PETITION TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

### GOVERNMENT BY CONSENT.

At a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, it was recognised that the policy of the College of Nursing, Ltd., in excluding from direct representation on the Provisional Council the Nurses' Organizations which had promoted the State Registration Movement, and paid the whole cost of its propaganda, was a policy to which the members of such societies would not submit.

The Committee, which had been mainly instrumental in converting the members of both Houses of Parliament to the principle of State Registration of Nurses, therefore determined that the very costly work which it had accomplished should not be rendered invalid by the reactionary policy of the College of Nursing, Ltd., which, while professing to promote State Registration and promising self-government to nurses, had drafted a restrictive Constitution, through which they could be coerced, without appeal, and had drafted a Bill which would practically substitute lay control through the nominations of the Nursing Schools, instead of through an independent Central Authority directly representative of Nursing and Medical organisations and of Government Departments.

The Committee decided, therefore, to organize a Petition to the Prime Minister, incorporating the democratic demand of trained nurses for direct and adequate representation on any Provisional Council set up by Parliament to make the Rules they have to obey—government by consent, in fact.

The organization of this vital bit of work was left to the President, who has invited Miss Beatrice Kent and Miss Annie Hulme to add to the debt the profession already owes them for their public-spirited devotion to its interests by acting as hon. secretaries, and compiling a Roll of Certificated Nurses who have signed the Petition, which will be presented to the Prime Minister whenever a Nurses' Registration Bill is introduced by the Government or otherwise.

In our Editorial last week we referred to the new movement, and issued the Form of Petition ready for signature. At the same time many consistent registrationists were invited to sign the Petition and to interest the younger generation of trained nurses in it, for it is their generation which will either greatly benefit or suffer inevitably through legislation.

The Nurses' Petition, inspired as it is by the strongest conviction that safeguards for liberty of conscience, action, and speech must be carefully conserved in any form of legislation calculated to benefit trained nurses and the community, has apparently gone straight to the goal; signed Forms have been pouring into the Office by every post, and from real registrationists there has been a wide demand for Forms for colleagues to sign, so that it would appear that our "Roll of Certificated Nurses" (who do not intend to be governed without consent) will speedily assume such dimensions that our Petition cannot fail to influence the legislators whenever a Nurses' Registration Bill is again before Parliament.

The House of Lords has already conceded the principle of direct representation of the Matrons' and Nurses' organizations in 1908, and we have no fear but that the House of Commons will protect the rights of the rank and file, if only they show themselves sufficiently alert and pertinacious, and alive to the principles of good government.

If only trained nurses are loyal to the public welfare, and give play to their higher attributes, they will win a just measure of nursing reform, but if they permit themselves to be deluded by specious arguments, and made objects of charity and contempt, if they hesitate from apathy or self-interest to fight for the greatest of all human rights—personal responsibility—their subjugation is assured.

We are constantly receiving enquiries: "How can I help the Registration Campaign?" We reply, Convince every trained nurse you know how great and precious a thing is human responsibility. Teach them that nothing really fine can be accomplished without it. Teach them how cruel and abhorrent a thing is that spirit of intolerance which denies such power of growth to fellow-creatures, and in this connection urge every nurse you know to sign the Petition, which claims for them as a class the right to make the Rules by which their personal and professional lives are to be guided and controlled, and through which their ethical standards are to be maintained.

Let each nurse who has signed the Petition during the past week bring it to the notice of her colleagues, and interest and instruct them in the vital principles for which it pleads.

The Petition can be signed at the Office, 431, Oxford Street, London, W., and Forms will be sent free to Matrons and nurses upon application to the Hon. Secretary, Nurses' Petition, at the same address.

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