

IRISH NURSES AND TRADES UNIONISM.

A Meeting was held in the Mansion House, Dublin, on the 28th ult., with the object of forming, if thought advisable, a nurses' trade union, to be allied with the Irish Women's Workers' Union. There was a large attendance.

Miss Louie Bennett, Organising Secretary of the Irish Women's Workers' Union (in the absence of the Lord Mayor, who sent a sympathetic letter) presided, and explained that a private meeting of nurses was held at 29, South Anne Street, and at that meeting it was decided to hold a public meeting to see how far they could secure the sympathy of nurses in organising a Nurses' Union as a branch of the Irish Women Workers' Union. They found that various other agencies were discussing the possibility of forming a Nurses' Union.

The Hon. Albinia Brodrick, writing from Caherdaniel, Co. Kerry, stated:—"It is full time that we nurses should awake out of sleep and take our rightful places amongst the workers of the world in fraternal organisation. We are the servants of humanity, and, in some sort, also their saviours. To us they turn at the highest and holiest moments of their life and of death. But they have not learnt, and we have not taught them, that service so responsible, so delicate, and so arduous cannot be rendered by a mere machine. . . . Even where we work in community, as in hospitals, we are ground down by a weight of labour, by insufficient salaries, and by the imposition upon us by matrons and committees of forced opinions on matters which most intimately concern us, and upon which they, more often than not, are not qualified to judge. . . . Under the College of Nursing, Ltd., we are left at the mercy of employers. It is time to change all that. We must realise ourselves, and make the world understand, that we are no mere machines, but flesh and blood, and spirit. We must demand and obtain an adequate time for rest, for recreation, for study, in the interest, not of ourselves alone, but of our patients."

Letters were received from the Right Hon. Dr. Cox, Dr. Katherine Maguire, Dr. Kathleen Lynn, Dr. Alice Barry, Dr. B. Solomons, and others.

Miss Bennett explained that the Irish Women Workers' Union was a non-political and non-sectarian organisation which existed solely for the purpose of improving the working and living conditions of women in Ireland. The Union recognised that nurses had a special position and special difficulties to deal with. They proposed to make the Nurses' Union a completely independent branch, except in the matter of finance. They recognised the necessity for a nurses' organisation. The nurses could appoint their own committee, and they would have full control of their own business in every way. Being affiliated with the Irish Women Workers' Union, which was the second largest body in Ireland, would be a great source of practical support to the nurses.

Miss Bennett said she gathered from expressions of opinion in the *Irish Times* that the writers were under the impression that a trades union existed

only for the purposes of a strike. That was a stupid idea. A strike of hospital nurses was, in her opinion, simply unthinkable—a remark which met with applause. What the nurses were demanding was more freedom, better pay, and shorter hours of duty. (More applause!) They would have noticed how active the public had become in their regard since they began to talk of forming a union. If the nurses allowed their plan for a trade union to collapse now, they might believe her that all those worthy intentions of the public in their regard would collapse also. The *Irish Times* accused trade unionists of lack of idealism, which proved that the *Irish Times* knew absolutely nothing about trade unionism.

After others had spoken in favour of the Union, several questions were asked, and some nurses present opposed the suggestion.

Miss Bennett said she did not know how they were going to rouse public opinion unless they were organised, but it was evident they were not prepared to join a trades union at present. Let them think it over. She hoped there would be another meeting at an early date.

OUTSIDE THE GATES.

TRAINED NURSES SYMPATHETIC.

Stern disapproval is being expressed of a proposal to raise funds for a War Memorial at Ilford by means of dances, at which merry couples would "jazz."

The spirited protest of an Ilford woman, who told a public meeting that the proposal cut women to the heart, is being echoed everywhere by wives and mothers who have lost their loved ones. They do not want dances, fêtes, and whist-drives to perpetuate the memory of those who fought so bravely and died for their country.

The *Weekly Dispatch* prints a number of messages which show how widespread is the feeling of reprobation provoked.

To quote two:—

The Countess of Limerick: When I read the protest of that sensible woman at Ilford, I felt that I wanted to meet her. She is right—quite right—the thing does not fit; it jars. It is a lack of respect to the very dead whom it is intended to honour.

There are thousands of mothers in England whose loss has been greater even than mine, and I feel that there would be a responsive echo in their hearts against this means of raising money.

Viscountess Templeton: The method is "disgraceful and disgusting."

If Ilford cannot have a subscription in its neighbourhood and raise sufficient money without resorting to such methods, they should abandon the project altogether.

Jazz dancing as a means of raising money to honour our heroes is absolutely unthinkable. There is a great deal too much of this kind of thing. Victory balls and such-like entertainments to help our soldiers and honour the dead should not be allowed. It is absolutely out of keeping with the great schemes for which they are organised.

Trained nurses sympathise with these views.

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