

and more powerful force than ever before. They will be able to carry out their important functions with a greater and wider understanding. We know perfectly well that the United Kingdom in the past has had many good nurses, but we claim that the country, particularly at the present time, requires many more. With the principles of this Bill accepted, there is reason to hope for better results from the labours which our nurses are called upon to perform. Hon. and right hon. Gentlemen knew quite well that if proper steps were taken for the elimination of the possibilities of disease, nurses would not be called upon to perform many of the functions which at present they have to carry out. Unfortunately, nurses will always be required for ministry in their own particular direction. Therefore we give full welcome to this measure, and we desire to give the nurses the fullest opportunities for the development of their spheres of work. As was well said by those in charge of the Ministry of Health Bill and the Transport Bill, we can see the desirability and advisability of unifying all the forces which operate in this direction.

THREE GREAT FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES.

There are three great fundamental principles on which this Bill seems to be based, and because it is founded on those great principles we welcome it all the more. First, there is registration, which will show us the number of those who desire to enter into the profession and will give greater opportunities for guidance in that direction. Training is the next important principle, which will give full equipment to those entering the profession and greater knowledge to discharge their important work. Then in Clause 11 an opportunity seems to be provided for setting up safeguards which are of such vital concern to everybody. It is eminently desirable that in this case, as in the medical profession, we should have a recognised standard of professional skill. I agree with the last speaker that there is some room for criticism of the constitution of the Council, but in agreeing to the acceptance of the important principles of the measure, like him, I feel that the discussion of those incidental details might well be left to the future. There is one important feature which we, the Labour Party, feel some further consideration might well have been given to. We should like to have seen contained in this measure more definite provision as to the working condition of those entering this honoured profession, especially for those who may be employed in institutions. If reports speak truly—and we have no reason to doubt them—some nurses in the past have not, to put it in the mildest possible form, been working under the most ideal conditions. To-day all sorts of different professions are opening their doors to the admission of women. More attractive remuneration is being held out to them, and if the nursing profession is to occupy the position which it has held so long and the greater and better position which we desire it to

hold in the future the nurses who go in to it must be more generously remunerated and have better working conditions.

SWEATED LABOUR.

I welcome this measure because I feel that under its operation there will be set up powers which will give the nurses opportunities to see for themselves that they are more adequately paid for the work they are doing. They will also be able to see for themselves that their general condition will be made as nearly ideal as possible. We always plead that there should not be sweated conditions in any industry, and least of all should there be sweated labour in the noble profession of nursing. I want to plead, too, that the nurses should be given a larger measure of control of the conditions under which they are called upon to work. Give the nurses some democratic control of their own conditions, then we are convinced that they will be much better in the future than they have been in the past. The question has been raised of financial assistance from the State. We ask that the most generous treatment financially which can be given should be undertaken by the State. The ultimate success of the administration of these important proposals will, I feel, eventually rest on what measure of support can come from the State in this direction. They ought not to hesitate in giving the fullest measure of support. The Labour Party views with the most sympathetic consideration possible the introduction of this measure, and joins with others who have spoken in pressing the Government to undertake the responsibility for seeing that its progress is facilitated. Whatever the House may do with regard to the nurses, it will not be possible to increase the esteem in which they are everywhere held. We can never repay the deep debt of gratitude for what nurses have done for the civil population in the past, and still less can we repay the debt we owe them for the sacrifices they have made during the progress of the last horrible war. We shall always retain the warmest admiration for the noble and self-sacrificing work which they have hitherto performed. These services have been freely and readily given in the service of humanity, but this measure ought not to be considered as any sort of reward for services which have been readily given and so nobly done.

A MEASURE OF JUSTICE.

We look upon it as a measure of justice brought forward in the full knowledge that co-ordination of effort can only be for the general good, and, if passed, we feel it will have a stimulating effect on the whole community and the nurses in particular. In the added dignity which would come to the nurses by the passing of this measure their power to carry out their good work would not be in the least impaired but would rather gain an added strength and their sphere of usefulness would become materially increased.

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