

and that everything will be properly done, because it is being done by competent nurses in whom you have confidence. On the other hand, there is nothing more distracting than having to keep one's eye on two or three nurses, the anaesthetist and the assistant, whilst at the same time you are doing critical operations.

There are various reasons why State registration of nurses should be supported. In the first place I think that considering the very small remuneration that nurses get we must make the profession more attractive by giving them a better status, otherwise we shall not get the same class of ladies that we are getting at the present time. As regards remuneration, I think it is deplorably bad. I do not think the public realise what nursing means, how much it takes out of a nurse, how much she has to do, and with no prospect of providing for the days when she is no longer able to do nursing. I was very much struck quite recently in connection with one of the military services, discussing with the very best theatre sisters I have ever had to do with, a woman absolutely invaluable, when she told me the remuneration she was getting. She told me she was getting £45 per year, and that for messing and clothing she had to pay £39, so that all she had in the way of pocket money and to make provision for her old age was £6 per year. That is not right. If State registration can do anything by raising the status of nurses to get better remuneration and greater consideration for them, for that reason alone, it should be supported. But, in addition, it is extremely important from the point of view of the public, because there is no question that there are many nurses, if you do not select trained women, who are sent out and who have had no proper training at all. Many of them in the small homes in the suburbs are simply kitchenmaids and parlour-maids, and we want to have a definite guarantee that when a nurse is sent she shall, at any rate, have some knowledge of the profession. Various objections have been suggested against the State registration of nurses.

OBJECTIONS DISCOUNTED.

One is that nurses require special qualifications, and the mere fact that they have been able to register under the State does not necessarily imply that they are good nurses. The same thing applies to doctors or any other body of people in whose case you keep a register of those who are fit for the profession. The State register will show that the nurse had such-and-such training, —three years probably— that she has passed an examination, and that she has been considered of good character, and, in view of the training which she has got, is considered a good nurse. That is all you can expect of a doctor when you take up the register. You cannot say anything more than that the doctor has passed the minimum of examinations requisite to register. It does not imply that he is a first-class doctor or of a very

high character, but taken for what it is, it is an extremely important thing, and this register will show that for such a period the nurse has qualified and exhibited a certain amount of knowledge of the profession. Then it has been said that years afterwards we cannot guarantee that a nurse will have the same knowledge that she had before. I think it probable that she will have a great deal more knowledge than when she was registered. That is what we assume as regards a doctor— that with age and experience a doctor improves. The same argument holds good as regards nurses. I see no necessity for labouring the thesis that the State registration of nurses will be for the good of the community.

A THOROUGHLY SOUND BILL.

The whole point of this Bill is—is it calculated to attain the object desired? I think that it is. Many points not suitable for discussion now may require discussion in Committee with a view to making things more clear, and perhaps arranging things better. But, taking it as it stands, I think that it promises to make a thoroughly sound Bill, calculated to attain the object desired, and for that reason I give it my warm support."

LABOUR CONSIDERS NURSES GROSSLY UNDERPAID.

MR. W. GRAHAM (Edinburgh Central): "I am very pleased to support this Bill. This is a matter on which I think Labour should express its views, as it is one which concerns the health of the community. All along our movement has felt that not only were the nurses not accorded the status to which they were entitled in the community, but that they were grossly underpaid, and we felt that until these conditions were remedied we had no right to expect the full measure of service which they should render to the community. I think I am entitled to say in the presence of medical Members of this House that, by means of what has been described as the strongest trade union in the world, they have very largely safeguarded themselves. Nurses have not had the same measure of success. I welcome this Bill if it is going to do anything to improve the position of the nurses in that respect. Any criticism which I have to offer is entirely sympathetic."

Mr. Graham expressed the view that there is, perhaps, not sufficient provision to make it absolutely certain that the rank and file of the members of the nursing profession will be represented fully on any body established to look after their interests. He considered it important, in order to get their general good will and co-operation for the measure, and also as being in keeping with the proposals of the industrial world and throughout the country generally at the moment, that, as far as possible, we should have regular, systematic consultation with the rank and file, as it is only by doing so we can get harmonious and sound conditions.

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