

the House of Commons, provides that nursing opinion shall be directly represented on the governing body by the nurses themselves, and not by 'persons'—not by persons, male, or female, some of whom might be just those persons from whose autocratic tyranny the nurses wish to escape. If you want democratic principle, do not give preferential treatment to any one society, either to the College of Nursing, Limited, or any other society, which you would do by this Bill; and do not grant to any particular class of nurses any abatement or exemption from those fees which are necessary for conducting examinations and compiling and maintaining a Register. Charge all of them the same fee; charge them what is necessary in order to carry out that work. They can afford and are willing to pay it.

THE BROAD DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE TWO BILLS.

"I can give you the broad distinction between the principle of these two Bills. The object of the State Registration Bill now in the House of Commons is to raise the vocation of nursing to the standard of a profession—to make it a self-supporting and self-reliant profession, of which every one of its members will be proud, and which will have the same rights and the same powers as other professions, some of which cannot be regarded as so high in the scale as that of trained nurses. I refer to midwives, whose training is far less serious than that of general nurses. On the other hand, you have the advocates of this Bill, who wish to keep nursing as a philanthropic concern, a charity, an institution to be supported by flag days, fetes, bazaars, and by all those adventitious aids by which charities are supported. Nurses do not want that, and it is exactly from that state of things that they wish to liberate themselves.

"Trained Nurses want to be Registered in order that their qualifications may have due public recognition, and they do not want to be compelled to become members of the College of Nursing. Under this Bill the College of Nursing says they are entitled to become members. Any one who has any knowledge of the world at all, and who can read between the lines, can see that 'entitled' in this case means that very strong pressure will be put upon them to belong to the College, and the College will thus have the power to exact from them any fee or subscription that they decide to charge, and thus you will destroy all existing societies and associations of nurses. If you want to nationalise all these associations—it is possible that you do, as nationalisation is the craze at the present time—do it in the right way. Set up a Royal Commission and make the advocates of the College of Nursing Bill the judges in their own cause. Give them every opportunity of bullying and browbeating the supporters of State Registration. That is the right way. But do not do it by a side wind in a Bill which wrongly purports to be a Registration Bill.

THE GROUND THAT THE BILL IS THOROUGHLY BAD.

"Just look at the Bill. It professes to be a Bill for the Registration of Nurses, but it starts straight off with a clause saying that the College of Nursing, Limited, is to be entitled to bear the title of "the College of Nursing," and then it goes on to say that this shall be administered by the General Nursing Council. You are not told what the General Nursing Council is. Here you are suddenly referred to a body which is not in existence and for which no provision has been made.

"I speak subject to correction, but I believe the usual course is first to state in a Bill that there shall be such and such a body, next to state how it is to be constituted, and then to lay down its duties and functions. This Bill goes the other way about, and speaks of a General Nursing Council, which does not exist and for which you look in vain throughout the Bill in order to find out how it is to be constituted and what it is to be like when constituted. My noble friend did give you an explanation. It is not Parliament who is to settle how it is to be constituted, but it is to be done in this way: A Provisional Nursing Council is to prepare the scheme, and that scheme is to be approved by the Privy Council and not by Parliament. What a roundabout way of doing things! I will not trouble your Lordships at this stage with the actual clauses of the Bill. I hope that I have said enough to show you how totally different this Bill is in principle from the Bill which only purports to be for the Registration of Nurses.

"There is, however, one point which was made by my noble friend to which I must refer before concluding. He said that he was at a loss to understand the statement that his Bill would result in the disfranchisement of Nurses. I should like to explain that to him. This Bill provides that as soon as 30,000 Nurses are registered, the rules are to be made and the council is to be formed. Do your Lordships not see what will happen? There are between 70,000 and 80,000 trained Nurses in this country. The College of Nursing have 14,000 already. Within a few weeks they can get another 16,000 and make up the 30,000; and then, having got the electorate entirely under their control, they will be able to settle everything. The other 40,000 or 50,000 Nurses will not have a say; the mere exigencies of time and distance would prevent them. These other Nurses, scattered far and wide, are very busy people, and in the ordinary course would not hear of this thing until long after the College had got 30,000 Nurses. The effect would be that you would have a gerrymandered constituency which would carry out exactly those things which the College of Nursing, Ltd., wish to have.

"Is it worth while to confuse and complicate the issue in this manner and to put ourselves at cross purposes with the House of Commons, who have already made good progress with the proper Nurses' Registration Bill? Is it right

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)