

measure through this House. We are not competent to settle controversies as to the representation of this or that body. They are certainly not appropriate topics for discussion here or in the Committee Room upstairs. It therefore was agreed that if, after discussion with the different parties interested in this, and with all the responsible bodies, a common measure of agreement could be arrived at, I would undertake to introduce a measure to set up a register. After several meetings, which have been held in the most friendly spirit, a common measure of agreement has been arrived at, and is embodied in this Bill.

In the first place, it sets up a council whose business it is to form a register, and it is provided that there shall be various parts of the register—a general part, a register of male nurses, children's nurses, mental nurses, and it may be others—and this council is authorised to draw up rules relating to various subjects, which are subject to the approval of the Minister of Health. When they are made, they will be laid before Parliament, as prescribed by sub-section (4) of Clause 3. The House will have cognisance of them before they become effective. One of the chief reasons for this provision is contained in paragraph (c), sub-section (2), of Clause 3. The House has always taken the view, and, I am sure, rightly, that when a new register is set up we must safeguard the interests of persons who are in *bona-fide* practice in the profession, as as to secure that they have a proper chance of being registered upon that register, notwithstanding that they may not have complied with all the conditions of training that may hereafter be prescribed. That has been the case in all instances. It is provided that within a period of two years after the date on which the rules are made, any person may be admitted to the register on producing evidence that they are of good character, of prescribed age, and for at least three years before the 1st day of November, 1919, were *bona fide* engaged in practice as nurses in attendance upon the sick. That means that a large body of women throughout the country who have been nursing faithfully for many years, but who may not have undergone all the highly-specialised training which may be thought desirable, or may be provided for hereafter, will be fully entitled to be entered upon the register. That is a very important safeguard. The council is given the necessary power to appoint officers and so forth.

THE QUESTION OF FINANCE.

There is no Financial Resolution required for this Bill. It is provided that all nurses should pay a fee of one guinea, and there is to be a fee of 2s. 6d. required annually for keeping the register alive. One of the chief difficulties of this kind of thing is that people move about or die or enter some other profession, and so the register ceases to be a live register. It is very necessary that some steps of a reasonable kind should be taken to keep it as nearly accurate as may be. It may be, though I do not think the necessity will arise, that the income of the council derived from this source will be insufficient to meet its expenses.

I do not think that is likely to arise, but, by agreement with the Treasury, I am authorised to say that if and when any appreciable deficit should occur which could not reasonably have been avoided, and could not be met by other expedients, such as drawing upon accumulated funds or a temporary advance from the Civil Contingencies Fund, the Treasury would be prepared to give favourable consideration to any proposal by me to ask Parliament to Vote a special Grant in aid of such deficiency. It is provided that in the event of any register being set up in Scotland or in any other part of the United Kingdom, the persons thereon entered shall be entitled to be entered on the English and Welsh register. It also is provided that persons who meet the necessary requirements as to training in any part of the British Dominions shall be entitled to be entered upon the register. There are various provisions safeguarding removals from the register, and giving an appeal to the High Court in regard to any alleged unfair removals, and giving an appeal to the Minister of Health in regard to the refusal of the council to approve any institution for training for the purposes of the rules provided under the Act.

THE SCHEDULE.

The main difficulties which arose last year are dealt with in the schedule. The schedule deals with the constitution of the council. It is very desirable that the council should contain a considerable element of nurses actually engaged in the practice of nursing. It is provided that the first council shall consist of twenty-five persons. We have included in this the decision which was arrived at in the discussion in Committee last summer, and it is provided that sixteen persons who are or have at some time been nurses actually engaged in rendering services in connection with the nursing of the sick shall be appointed by the Minister of Health, who is to consult the two main bodies which have been interested in this question, also the nursing body which at the present time has a Royal Charter, and such other bodies as it may be found desirable to consult. The House will remember that the rock upon which the other Bills split was the dispute which arose on the point as to how the council was to be set up. It is to be set up in the manner here proposed in the schedule after consultation, in order to get the register into being. It is then prescribed that after the termination of the office of the first council—and it shall not hold office longer than three years—the sixteen persons mentioned shall be elected by the nurses on the register, and they, together with nine persons appointed by the Privy Council, the Board of Education, and the Minister of Health, will form a permanent council in the manner prescribed in the Bill. In this way we have got over the difficult points of the controversy. I am sure that the more this Bill is examined, the more the House will agree that it is the only way to deal effectively and fairly with the points that have hitherto been in dispute. It is essential that the first step is to get the

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