

Women of Great Britain and Ireland, for their support at their recent Annual Meeting at Leicester of the Nurses' Registration Bill, promoted by the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses, a Bill which incorporates principles held by the organised Societies of Nurses to be of vital importance in any Act for the organisation of nursing education and the government of their profession, and hopes the National Council of Women will continue its interest in this question of national importance.

It trusts that the promise given by the Minister of Health, in the House of Commons on June 27th, that he will undertake at the earliest possible time, on behalf of the Government, to introduce a measure providing for the Registration of Nurses will speedily result in the passage into law of a just Nurses' Registration Bill.

The last vote of thanks was happily moved by Miss Helen Pearse, who, on behalf of the National Union of Trained Nurses, had moved the Resolution referred to. Miss Pearse said it was a great pleasure to nurses, at such a critical time, to have the backing of the most important body of women in the kingdom.

Miss Rimmer, who seconded, characterized the Leicester resolution as a magnificent indication of the trend of public opinion.

RESOLUTION I.

The first resolution was moved from the Chair :

The Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, in Annual Meeting assembled, desires to place on record its emphatic condemnation of the action taken by the Council of the College of Nursing, Ltd., to wreck the Nurses' Registration Bill, promoted by the Central Committee, after it had passed its Second Reading and Grand Committee Stages with approval and support from all sections of the House of Commons.

The College of Nursing, Ltd., which persuaded nurses to join it by promising to obtain Registration for them by Act of Parliament, induced many of these members, by most inaccurate statements, to persuade Members of Parliament to wreck the Nurses' Registration Bill; which policy was adopted by a group of Manchester members associated with Mr. Leonard Lyle, who gave notice of a number of contentious amendments, on the Report Stage, calculated to obstruct the Third Reading of the Bill and prevent its being sent to the House of Lords.

This Meeting urges the Minister of Health to bring in the Government Bill for the State Registration of Nurses, to which he is pledged, without delay, so that trained nurses may be protected from the autocratic control of Voluntary Hospital Governors, who have persistently opposed the organisation of Trained Nursing by the State, and are primarily responsible for the present lack of efficient nursing education, and for the overwork, and unjust economic conditions of nurses.

In moving this resolution the President (Mrs. Bedford Fenwick) said that it was rather comprehensive. It first dealt with the very natural indignation felt by the members that after the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses had drafted a Bill with that object, an upstart Council of Employers, using Matrons as their agents, and Nurses as their pawns, had adopted a policy designed to wreck this great emancipation measure.

The power behind this Council was that of money and social influence. Such influence

might be used for the benefit of the country, but when it came to a number of laymen becoming incorporated as the College of Nursing, Ltd., its aim being to control the whole nursing profession, then this influence was not good, but evil, and abuses resulting from this reactionary policy must be swept away, if not through evolution, then through revolution.

Mrs. Fenwick described the fight of those promoting the State Registration cause, extending over thirty years, and how, owing to the antiquated procedure in our wonderful Mother of Parliaments it had been impossible for a private member's Bill to be discussed.

She referred to the good fortune of the Nurses' Bill this session, to the action of the Council of the College of Nursing, Ltd., in trying to get the tyrannical clauses of its Bill substituted for the enlightened and liberal provisions of the Central Committee's Bill, and the line taken by Mr. Leonard Lyle, Chairman of a Nurse Training School, in Committee, who regarded the question from the Olympian altitude of the employer, and did not hesitate to insult the organised societies of nurses, whose independence and power he feared, and meant to suppress if possible.

The College later introduced its rival Bill into the House of Lords, and the campaign to compel the withdrawal of the Central Committee's Bill from the Commons, so that the coast would be clear for the College Bill; and upon Major Barnett refusing to commit hari-kari, the mandate from Manchester to wreck the Bill—a policy which had been carried out, so far, by the Manchester group of M.P.s, who had flooded the Order Paper with contentious and camouflaged amendments, to which no sane Parliament would consent, and bored the House with long-winded and irrelevant speeches so as to waste precious time.

Dr. Addison took an active part in the proceedings in the Committee Stage, but, unfortunately, amendments disconcerting to the Government were subsequently put down.

Since July 4th, when the Report Stage was again taken in the House of Commons, the Executive Committee had conferred with the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Health, Sir Robert Morant, and handed in the minimum demands of principles which must be incorporated in any measure receiving the Committee's support, including self-government for nurses, an independent Statutory Body, a State examination, and an appeal for nurses summoned to appear before the Council, to the High Courts.

Members of the Society must exert all the influence they possibly could in support of a just Bill. They wanted a Bill which was just to the worker, not a Bill drafted in the interests of Hospital Governors, who had exercised absolute power too long, and who knew little of nursing education. They had had ample evidence of the type of control likely to be enforced in such a Bill dealing with their discipline, economic status, and education, if left to the tender mercies of

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)