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EDITORIAL.

THE REGISTERED NURSES' PARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL.

As we report in another column, the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, at its annual meeting last week, had to consider its future policy—the object for which it had been working for the last eighteen years, “To obtain an Act of Parliament providing for the Legal Registration of Nurses,” having been triumphantly achieved.

The members present endorsed the recommendation of their Executive Committee that the society should continue as “The Registered Nurses Parliamentary Council,” as there is at present no society of nurses whose sole object is to concentrate on legislation affecting nurses and national health. Yet the initiation of such legislation, and the decision to take action on proposed legislation affecting these interests require expert knowledge and promptness, both of which, from its political experience, the society is in a position to give. It, therefore, is to be congratulated on deciding to continue its useful and successful work for the benefit of the community and of the nursing profession; and, further, that it arranged an inclusive annual subscription for (1) the working expenses of the Council, and (2) THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, which the members adopted as their official organ. They will thus be kept informed of the business of the new Council, and in touch with one another.

Two definite pieces of work were put before the members as affording scope for action in the immediate future, if necessary by securing the introduction of enabling Bills.

1. The political enfranchisement of nurses resident in hospitals and institutions.

2. The securing of rank for naval and military nurses.

At present the position of nurses in regard to the exercise of the Parliamentary Franchise is most anomalous. In one hospital they are permitted to exercise this right, in another they are denied it, though living under precisely similar conditions. This anomaly should be abolished, either by a test case or by a short enabling Act.

The question of Rank for Naval and Military nurses is one of great urgency. At present it is granted only to the members of the Canadian Army Nursing Service.

Not only military nurses in the United Kingdom, but in New Zealand and in the United States of America, are keenly alive to the necessity of rank, not primarily that their own status may be ensured, but in order that they may have the requisite authority for carrying out their instructions. It is always unfair to give responsibility without corresponding authority, and this is the present position. The members of the Nursing Services during the war could not require obedience to their directions from orderlies because they had no official rank or military status, and American nurses advance as a reason for their plea for rank, that instances are not wanting in which the lives of the wounded were endangered for lack of authority on the part of the nurses. There is abundant evidence to show that the demand for such rank should not be delayed. The only effective way to accomplish a definite piece of work is to concentrate upon it, and “Rank of Nurses” will be one of the immediate objectives of the Registered Nurses Parliamentary Council.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)