

bring in a Bill dealing with their hours of work. It was very improbable that the Minister of Health would consent to bring in a second Nurses' Bill on so controversial a question. The economic questions involved in the Bill for the State Registration of Trained Nurses had resulted in a long and acute struggle, due to the opposition of hospital committees, before it had been placed on the Statute Book. The opposition which might be anticipated to a Nurses' Hours of Employment Bill was that of those whose opposition had already been tested, and who objected to State interference with their present unlimited powers.

We had now a Bill by which it was proposed to regulate the Hours of Employment of Nurses. Why oppose it? Directly the General Nursing Council began to organise nursing education it would be up against the nurses' hours of work. So long as every irresponsible and autocratic committee could regulate nurses' hours to suit their own convenience it was a public danger to the nursing profession. She was in favour of keeping nurses working in institutions in the Minister of Labour's Bill, because the Department was not an employer of nursing labour, and the proposal to ask the Minister of Health to draft and introduce another Nurses' Bill to regulate their hours was impracticable at the present time. A bird in the hand was worth two in the bush.

MISS LLOYD STILL expressed the opinion that the Committees of Voluntary Hospitals were out to protect the interests of the nurses.

DR. BOSTOCK HILL said he was not present at the last meeting, but it appeared that the Council then voted that nurses be taken out of the present Bill; that being so, it seemed a good thing that the Minister of Health should be asked to bring in a Bill. It was not suggested that he should be given autocratic powers.

DR. GOODALL said he was surprised at the voting on the last occasion. The letter from the College of Nursing, Ltd., upon which their opinion was invited by the Minister of Health, was in favour of nurses being included in the particular Bill drafted by the Minister of Labour, and the members of the College of Nursing, Ltd., on the Council, in voting to exclude them, therefore voted against their own College. He did not believe that they obtained the real voice of the Council on that occasion. He subsequently called a meeting of the nurses in his own hospital and they were in favour of being placed under the Minister of Health rather than under the Minister of Labour.

The Resolution was carried by 14 votes to 6.

RESOLUTION III.

Forty-Eight Hours to be the Maximum.

MISS COX DAVIES then moved that the definite number of hours in which a nurse should work in attendance upon the sick, approved by the Council, should be stated, and that in any Bill introduced by the Minister of Health the number of hours which a nurse should work should be 48 hours a week.

DR. BEDFORD PIERCE presumed attendance on the sick included the insane, and the problem was a complex one. A large number of persons in hospitals for the insane needed what might fitly be described as social service. It might be argued this was nursing; but if it were included in an eight hours day it would make it difficult to render this form of service, such as playing billiards, bowls, or cricket. In some cases, certainly, this form of duty might be anxious duty, but it would be increasingly difficult to arrange for if the resolution were carried without modification. He proposed the addition to the resolution of the words "and for mental nurses while in responsible attendance upon patients."

MISS DOWBIGGIN expressed the opinion that if a nurse was on duty, she was on duty, no matter what her work might be.

MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK asked whether the Bill applied to private nurses. She pointed out that a Judge in a County Court had emphasised the difference between a "contract of service" and a "contract for service."

THE CHAIRMAN said that the Ministry of Health had formed the opinion that private nurses would be included in the Bill.

MISS SWISS stated that public health nurses worked less than 48 hours a week.

DR. GOODALL said it was clear that the framers of a Bill regulating the hours of nurses would have many difficulties; there would have to be a lot of exceptions. The nurses under the Metropolitan Asylums Board were asked if they would prefer a 48 hours week, or a 50 hours week, and a week extra annual leave, and they much preferred the latter arrangement.

The question of overtime having been mentioned, MISS COX DAVIES said that she did not propose to insert any provision for overtime for this or that class of nurse. If they considered that an eight hours day was for the good of nurses, then the question of overtime could not come in.

It was not proposed that those who worked less than 48 hours a week should have to work more, but that the Minister of Health should be asked to introduce a Bill in which the maximum working hours were defined.

SIR JENNER VERRALL pointed out that in the scheme put forward by the College of Nursing, Ltd., the inclusion of nurses in the Minister of Labour's Bill was approved, but its Council recommended that provision should be made in a special clause for a 56 hours working week for nurses. Now they had gone from 56 to 48.

The resolution was approved.

THE CHAIRMAN suggested that further consideration of the letter of the Minister of Labour sent to the Council for its consideration through the Minister of Health, might be adjourned to the next meeting.

Consideration of the letter of the Minister of Health was then deferred to the next meeting.

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