

may hold their own meetings, if this is thought advisable, in the interests of their group.

In Trade Union terms, these groups are known as Chapels, and they elect their own representative or Secretary, who is known as the "Warden" of the Chapel. Each group will be represented at all Branch meetings, when resolutions from the various groups can be discussed by the body of members. Thus we shall have all members' interests represented though it may not be possible for each member to attend the meetings regularly.

Some of you may think that nurses have not time for all this. In the past, no! but the time has come when we must insist on getting time for it, if we are to have any profession left to boast of. There can be no evolution without effort. Once started, a little assistance from each one will be all that is required, and I wish you to understand that this Union is not an Association formed to manage the affairs of the profession for the Nurses, it is an Organisation formed by Nurses to enable them to manage and control their own affairs.

Possibly no movement ever started so heavily handicapped which reached such a high measure of success. Trade Union principles, so far as combined effort to better the conditions of labour can be called by that name, have existed throughout all the ages. It has always been natural for people who are dissatisfied with their conditions of employment to talk and act with others for the betterment of these conditions. In this we have proof of the necessity for this Union. Various groups of Nurses are meeting together to discuss the present conditions of work, and I think I can safely say that none of us are satisfied with the present state of affairs. But salvation cannot be brought about by a mere handful of already overworked women straining their utmost in isolated groups. We must unite in one strong Union.

It is the old, old story of employer and employed, and until we can present one united organisation we shall be left behind. Full advantage has been taken by the employer of this lack of co-operation amongst nurses.

Miss McCara then referred to the organisation of the Board of Health in Scotland, to which duties formerly discharged by the Local Government Board, the Insurance Commissioners of Scotland, the Lords of the Privy Council under the Midwives Act, and the Board of Education have already been assigned. Would the voluntary hospitals, she asked, come next? Continuing, she said:—We have already realized a State Medical Service. May we not foresee a State Nursing Service, involving all branches of the profession under the Board of Health? Should these changes find nurses in an unorganized position it will be another proof to the Government that we nurses are a negligible body of women to be dictated to at the whim of the Ministry of Health, they will continue to regard us as a quiet, passive, unimportant detail, easily exploited, easily oppressed, and not worth bothering about. The employer will be set free to make what arrangements he may choose for his work, and to drive

what bargains he may choose with individuals. Because of his superiority in economic strength, the result will be that our salaries will be entirely under his control, and he can accept the Red Cross suggestion of V.A.D.'s as district nurses.

The idea of semi-trained nurses for the Highlands and Islands has been advocated by Members of Parliament. So far as I have heard, the only reason in favour of the idea is the cheapness of their services. Think what nursing duties in the Highlands and Islands must mean. Struggling to pull pneumonia or typhoid patients back from the jaws of death; converting a cottage room into an operating theatre at an hour's notice; coping single handed with puerperal mania; saving the eyesight of the babe, or battling with an epidemic of influenza such as was recently experienced at St. Kilda. Is this to be relegated to V.A.D.'s with a smattering experience gained in war hospitals? The most efficiently equipped woman would hesitate to accept such responsibilities.

Our basic principles are to raise and standardise education and training and thereby ensure for the citizens that no second best can be foisted on them no matter where the accident of birth may have placed them, and to protect ourselves from economic pressure—that is, the undercutting of our labour—the only goods we have to put on the market. A trade union at its purest is a co-operation of workers to help one another.

No doubt nurses have suffered much in the past from overwork, under pay, and inefficient and unstandardised training. Considering the short working life of a nurse our remuneration should be more, not less, than that of other women. Various schemes to raise nurses' salaries have been mooted, but unless they are going to take up the cudgels for themselves, and enforce better conditions, nothing will ever come of it.

We hear a great deal about the privilege of rendering service to the people. It should be equally the privilege of the people to see that the nurse does not have to render all the sacrifice as well as all the service.

We have decided, therefore, to link ourselves together with all those who have something to give to the common good, and in doing so we claim the moral and political support of the entire organisation of trade unionism. We now form one link in a long chain, and the stronger our link the quicker and more effective will be our pressure, but our greatest strength lies in the fact that we are no longer a single unit. We have the sympathy and help of other sections of trade unionists, and can rely on the support of workers in other departments of national industry. Surely it is right that the workers in any industry should have some say in the conditions under which they work.

To those who fear extremes, I would say that organisation leads to a knowledge of affairs, and to consideration before action. While higher wages and shorter hours are not an end in themselves, they are the means by which the greatest end can be achieved—the Universal Happiness of Mankind.

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