

WORKERS CLOSING UP THEIR RANKS.

The Poor Law Workers' Trade Union recently held a most successful meeting at Chelsea Town Hall, at which the Chairman, Mr. W. D. Wiggins, Medical Superintendent of the Greenwich Infirmary, Vice-President of the Union, was influentially supported on the platform, amongst others by Miss Parsons, of the Professional Union of Trained Nurses.

Mr A. Lewis (Assistant Secretary) gave a most hopeful report, and said their great purpose was to unite the above Poor Law Service into one great, effective trade union—the policy of the Union has always being to proceed along the lines of negotiation. They had on the previous day completed an agreement with the Asylum Workers' Union Committee by which they would federate these two great unions of public servants into one great organised body. Each to retain its identity, but each to have behind it the whole force of the other. That was a step towards the unity of the Public Health Services.

TRAINED NURSES' PROFESSIONAL UNION.

Miss Parsons, of the Professional Union of Trained Nurses, said she was delighted to have the opportunity of speaking, because she felt very strongly, after 23 years' experience in the nursing profession, that it was time nurses had some organisation. Nurses had for years been wanting better conditions, improved salaries, shorter hours of duty. They had felt for years that they were not giving of the best within them, because they were getting worn out too fast. Many times during her three years' training she had gone supperless to bed and cried herself to sleep after working 14 or 15 hours; and three days out of seven she had had to undertake twelve solid hours of duty without a break. Those days, she was glad to say, were no more. Still, there was a good deal of ground for complaint and matter for improvement. Nurses had wakened up to the fact that there was a method they could themselves adopt of improving their conditions and getting those conditions they felt they ought to have. Whilst a real wrong remained they must fight to get it righted, if they could not remove it in any other way. Her own policy was to try the milder ways first. With regard to the nursing profession, this had always been a very difficult thing, because nurses were often treated more like machines than human beings. They were not supposed to have a mind of their own. After all was said and done, everyone, without exception, was gifted with a certain degree of intelligence. Now, why should not that degree of intelligence be recognised? No worker, whatever her status in the nursing world, should be treated as a machine. After a good many years of stagnation and sleepy lethargy nurses had formed an organisation for the betterment of their conditions. At the end of three months they obtained recognition and registration as a professional union and ever since

the first week in January last their numbers had been swelling.

NO STRIKE CLAUSE.

Miss Parsons said that the constitution of the Union was a most reasonable one; and they differed from most Unions in this, that they had no strike clause. They had met with a good deal of opposition on this point, but they had decided to leave out the strike clause, because they were not going to leave sick people. The Union did not believe in leaving the sick untended. Very far from that; if any member of the Union chose to adopt such a course her membership of the Union would probably be at once cancelled. They were going to try to get what they wanted by other methods, and leave out the strike altogether. They wanted to get, first of all, a fair living wage for a fair and competent service. They were also out to try, through their organisation, to enable nurses to provide for their old age and their sickness, and as one of the means to this end they had already set apart in one of the London hospitals six beds which could be used for nurses until the Union could make better arrangements for them. They looked forward to the time when they would have a nurses' club, with living accommodation, recreation rooms, and entertainments. There was no doubt that nurses met with serious injustice sometimes, and such grievances would be investigated by the Union.

Miss Parsons was thanked for her address by the meeting, on the motion of the Chairman.

HOW MUCH WOULD YOU CALL A PART?

The dispenser was rather exhausted; the out-patients had been more than usually trying. One had produced a pint bottle for eye drops; another was annoyed that she had only four items prescribed. "Ain't 'e put down that brown medicine, Miss?" It had been difficult to drive into the mother with four children that the ointment for Tommy's ringworm was *not* suitable for the baby's eye, and that she must either produce another receptacle or a penny for one provided by the hospital.

Thanks be, the evening is nearly finished. The last patient puts his bottle through the hatch. "Mix this lotion with four parts of water."

"Very good, Miss."

The footsteps which had retreated down the staircase are heard returning, the head reappears at the hatch. "Please, Miss, 'ow much would you call a part? Would a egg-cup be a part?"

A public health nurse of the Manitoba Provincial Board of Health has been appointed to do work in connection with the Venereal Disease Clinic of the Winnipeg General Hospital in conjunction with the Social Service Department.

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