

unanimously at a recent Conference of nurses convened by the Association:—

RESOLUTION.

That the provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1920, should not apply to professional nurses, trained and in training, to whose conditions of service it is unsuitable.

In the opinion of Trained Nurses, the result of this new taxation will be to compel them to contribute to a scheme designed to benefit industrial and not professional workers, which is therefore unjust. This meeting of Trained Nurses desires to record its unqualified disapproval of the provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act as affecting the members of their profession, and expresses its conviction that it will add one more factor to the unpopular conditions which deter many desirable candidates from entering the Nursing Profession.

This meeting respectfully urges the Minister of Labour to formulate a Special Scheme regulating the unemployment insurance of professional nurses.

Mrs. Fenwick said when Nurses received their certificates after three or four years' training they were at liberty to engage in various branches of nursing. Ten Government Departments employed trained nurses, but she wished to emphasise the conditions of private nurses. As Hon. Superintendent of the Registered Nurses' Society, a co-operation of private nurses, she found the members strongly objected to come under the provisions of the Act. They were not suited to their needs. Nurses were compulsorily insured under the National Insurance Act. Many objected to it, and to prove how useless it was to them, the Trained Women Nurses' Friendly Society, of which she was Chairman, had saved cent. per cent. of the subscriptions, because members when sick found the panel system irksome, and failed to apply for benefit. One spirited nurse took the matter into Court, and upon the judgment of a County Court Judge private nurses working on co-operations were pronounced exempt. A few nurses had their cards stamped by patients, and others evaded the Act.

Mrs. Fenwick said it would be most distasteful to highly qualified professional nurses to be required to stand in a queue, report themselves daily, and sign a book at an Employment Centre, and to be compelled to take any work offered to them if suitable or not. They might be compelled to pay, but they would not apply for the subsidy. It was a tyrannical method to which trained nurses would not submit. Private nurses were most anxious to be exempted from the Act. If this was not possible she proposed that another Conference with the Labour Ministry should be called, and a special scheme formulated to regulate the unemployment insurance of professional nurses.

Mr. Bircham enquired as to the economic and disciplinary organisation of Nurses' co-operations, to which Mrs. Fenwick replied.

Mrs. Fenwick enquired if Nurses were exempted if the employer still had to pay the tax, and, if so, who would benefit by it?

To this no satisfactory reply was given.

In concluding her remarks Mrs. Fenwick referred to the very serious shortage of probationers for

training, and urged that nothing should be done to discourage still further well-educated girls from entering the nursing profession. The Labour Ministry was specially interested in the matter as skilled nursing was a necessity for the poor.

Miss Cox-Davies said she wished to strongly support Mrs. Fenwick's remarks on this point. She referred to the numbers of other professions and employments now open to women, and only those who found pleasure in caring for sick humanity should enter the nursing profession. Nothing should be done to discourage such from joining the ranks of the nurses. As Matron of the Royal Free Hospital she now required eighteen probationers to open new wards and had not one on the waiting list.

Miss H. L. Pearse endorsed Mrs. Fenwick's remarks. She enquired whether casual (nursing) workers were exempt from the Act, and on a reply in the negative having been given, she pointed out how both nurses in the various services and the public would suffer thereby, as there were many nurses so placed that they were glad to work occasionally during the year, and she, as Superintendent of a public nursing service (London County Council School Nurses) was equally glad to be able to employ them from time to time, but if they had to be insured for unemployment it would present a very difficult situation, which would militate against their occasional employment.

Miss Peterkin, General Superintendent, speaking on behalf of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute, said that all their nurses had begged those in authority to use every effort to get them excluded from the Act.

Mr. Roberts, referring to the National Health Insurance Act, explained how it had not proved of the slightest benefit to the nurses who were always medically treated free of charge and cared for during illness if they belonged to the staff of a hospital. By request, Mr. Roberts explained the duties of a hospital Sister.

Mr. Bircham asked if the nurses had a 48-hours' week, or were paid overtime.

Mr. Roberts replied in the negative so far as the voluntary hospitals were concerned.

Mr. E. W. Morris stated that nurses hated being included in the Act and asked if, when estimating emoluments for exemption, the calculation ought to be based on the actual cost to the hospital, or value to the nurse?

The Chairman replied that the value to the person employed should be the basis.

Mrs. Fenwick presumed it would not be in order to propose a resolution, although apparently it would be passed unanimously (laughter).

A representative of the Ministry of Labour pointed out that the Unemployment Insurance Act provided that the Minister of Labour had power to sanction special schemes by a joint council or association of employers and employees. He suggested that employers and bodies of nurses should draft a special scheme and get the Minister to agree to it.

The Chairman having been accorded a vote of thanks, the meeting terminated.

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