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## EDITORIAL.

### POOR LAW GUARDIANS CLAIM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NURSING PROFESSION.

Trained Nurses who, after a struggle of thirty years' duration, have been granted by Parliament the right to govern their own profession, to define its standards, and to maintain its discipline, under the constitution of the General Nursing Council, which, in England and Wales, provides that sixteen out of the twenty-five members shall be elected by the Registered Nurses themselves, will do well to note the demand made by Poor Law Guardians (as voiced in the leading article in the *Poor Law Officers' Journal* of September 30th) to participate in the government of the nursing profession. To the views expressed in this article we take the strongest exception.

The statement that "the Act constituting the Nursing Council is practically a war-time measure, and it has all the defects of the rush legislation of those hectic days" will raise a smile with those nurses who diligently, in season and out of season, worked for thirty years for the passing of an Act for their State Registration, and who know how carefully every clause—every word—of the various draft Bills were deliberated upon and considered. Nor is it correct to state that the Act is a war-time measure, for the Government Bill was not introduced until nearly a year had elapsed after the Declaration of the Armistice.

Had the nurses consented to the constitution of a Council dominated by the representatives of the interests of their employers they might have secured the passage of a Nurses' Registration Act at almost any time during the last twenty years. The opposition to Registration has not been opposition to the mere entering of the names of nurses in a book, but to the claim involved that the government of the Profession of Nursing and the definition of its standards, like those of Medicine, Midwives and the Law, should be in the hands of the Registered Members of the Profession, not of their employers; and the struggle all along centred around this claim.

The Poor Law Guardians do not claim the right to define the standards of the medical profession, they accept those laid down by the General Medical Council. Similarly they accept the standards defined for midwives by the Central Midwives Board. And if Guardians are seriously going to press what our contemporary describes as their "legitimate claim" to be represented on the General Nursing Council, on the grounds that their "cumulative and collective experience has not been drawn upon"; that their "experience ought to be statutorily at the disposal of the Nursing Council"; and that the General Nursing Council cannot be representative "so long as the principal employing body is denied membership"; then it behoves Registered Nurses to determinedly oppose this untenable claim.

The answer is that the General Nursing Council for England and Wales is an educational and disciplinary authority; that according to established custom the Privy Council has representatives upon it; that its educational character is emphasised by the appointment of two persons by the Board of Education; and that the appointment of five persons by the Minister of Health permits of the inclusion in the Council of medical practitioners whose participation in the theoretical teaching of nurses is a recognised necessity.

But the backbone of the Council is to be found in its nurse members. It is they who know the problems of their own profession and are acquainted with its educational necessities. And amongst these members the Council has the advantage of the knowledge of two Matrons of Poor Law Infirmaries, so that nursing interests under the Poor Law should be adequately represented.

It may reasonably be asked what knowledge of Nursing Education Poor Law Guardians possess which they do not obtain from their Medical Officers or Matrons? In our opinion, however, their real reason for desiring representation upon the Governing Body of the Nursing Profession is not their interest in Nursing Education, of which the majority of Guardians are supremely ignorant, but the

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