

any Rules under the Act with respect to conditions of admission. It is abundantly plain that the conditions of admission to the register have reference to the qualifications of nurses which the Council may prescribe. They cannot refer to the procedure or machinery by which the names of nurses who possess the necessary qualifications actually become inscribed upon the register."

Rule 9a has nothing whatever to do with the qualification of nurses. It is purely a machinery Rule, which does no more than prescribe the evidence which nurses are to adduce of their qualifications. The new rule neither raises nor lowers the standard of qualifications, which are prescribed by other Rules, and remain precisely the same as before the new Rule was made. The legal point is absolutely clear, and even if it were challenged I would point out that Parliament never passed an Act of such an absurd nature as to put the English Nursing Council, and the Minister responsible for it, in the position of being incapable of carrying out the Act in England except by the consent of the Scotch Nursing Council. I have consulted the Scotch Nursing Council on several occasions, and if the necessity arises I am quite ready to consult them again, but it is a different thing to say you ought to consult someone and to say the Rule is *ultra vires* because you have not consulted them. The law is clear on that point. The provision regarding consultation is directory, and if it is not done it does not legally invalidate the Rule. So much for the legal argument. Now I ought to pass to the merits of the case.

MAJOR BARNETT: On a point of Order, I asked the right hon. Baronet to give an answer before I concluded my remarks on the legal point to save the time of the House, and I ought to be allowed to deal with the merits.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. and gallant Gentleman concluded his speech by moving. He cannot speak a second time.

MAJOR BARNETT: I specially asked the right hon. Baronet to answer while I was speaking.

MR. SPEAKER: The right hon. Baronet could not speak until there was some question before the House. It was necessary, therefore, to have the Motion moved and seconded before the Minister could speak.

SIR A. MOND: I thought that would be the position. I feel I must deal with the whole facts fully. This is really a very old-standing squabble, which really ought not to trouble the House. Anyone, who knows the history of the story, knows what a long feud there was between two different nursing associations, one championed by the hon. Member who is asking the House to reject the Rules, the other by another body of people. So long did the feud go on, that no Rules came into existence at all. My predecessor in office got a Bill passed, a Council has been set up, and I have been doing my best to get it to work. On the Council, unfortunately, the old feud has been pursued by a very small minority, which is now trying to destroy the Rules, which I have sanctioned because they are the only way in which nurses in

this country, numbering some 50,000, will ever get on the register in their lifetime. What is the position in which I have been placed? A crisis in the Nursing Council, resignation of the chairman, resignation of 16 out of 21 members of the committee. I have now an able chairman, and I have got the bulk of the committee to go back on the understanding that I would support them. They have introduced a Rule. The purpose is two-fold. One is that, instead of a nurse having to send her original nursing certificate to London to be certified, she can get a certified copy and send it up under proper conditions and have it entered. That is done because we have found from experience that nurses have the greatest objection to part with their original papers. They are afraid they may get lost or mislaid. They are the one vital document in their possession, and they would sooner not be registered at all. The second point is that there are two big organisations which have been in existence for many years before this Act came into force, the College of Nurses and the Royal British Nursing Association. Out of 50,000 nurses, over 19,000 are registered in the College of Nurses' Register. Their qualification is more severe than the other. They require three years' training instead of one. What are we doing under these Rules? We are enabling the Registrar of the Nursing Council to go and examine copies of the certificates of the Royal College of Nurses, who have the roll, whenever an application is made, to satisfy himself. The same will be done with the other nursing associations. There is no favour shown to anybody.

I will tell the House why I have been anxious to take this action, and why it is essential to speak this evening. In the four months since the date when the Register came into existence in November, 3,235 actual cases were received and only 984 were completed. Applications were coming in at the rate of 800 a month, and less than one-third have been finally passed by the Council. The present Council must, according to the Act, come to an end not later than the 23rd November next. Out of 50,000 nurses you have only 1,500 on the Register, and unless between now and the 23rd November next you get a large number of qualified nurses on the Register, you will be in the absurd position of having the Council for the next three years elected by quite a small number of the 50,000 nurses. Therefore it is important and necessary to have a speeding up of the machinery which will put nurses on the Register as rapidly as possible. That will do away with the meticulous and ridiculous manner in which this matter has been treated up to now. It is impossible for the Chairman of the Registration Committee to go into long details of every one of these certificates, and to start a cross-examination in every case. If he did so, many of the nurses would be dead and buried before they got on the Register. These are the reasons why I have sanctioned this procedure. It is machinery. The Nursing Council, which ought to understand its business, has passed it by a majority of 16 to 6. The Matrons' Association

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