

merely to enable a nurse more easily to have her certificates sent and approved.

. . . I do not want the House to have a wrong impression as to the merits of this case, nor to think that this is merely a question of a statement on the one side by my hon. and gallant Friend as representing the nurses of the whole of this country, and the Minister of Health and other unscrupulous people who are trying to get the better of the nurses. I do not want them to think that, because there are other bodies, infinitely greater numbers of nurses than any of the societies that have been petitioning hon. Members and have so successfully taken in some—not all—of my friends on the Labour benches. It is by no means the unanimous wish of the nurses that these Rules now lying on the Table should not come in as part of the law of the Registration Act. . . My hon. and gallant Friend wants the nurses to run their own profession, and the only way to do that is to get on the Register as soon as possible. They are not getting on it. There are only 1,500 on the Register, and the object of these Rules is to enable them to get on the Register without all the formalities they have to go through now. . .

CAPTAIN ELLIOT: . . . The question of law raised at the beginning of the Debate seems to have received very perfunctory attention from the Minister of Health. The Minister is a man of strong personality, who has, so far, received very little opposition in any of the vigorous steps which he has taken in remodelling the health services of the country, and he is, perhaps, a little inclined to brush aside opinions which do not exactly coincide with his own. It seems to me, even if we take it on the simplest point of all, that he is availing himself of a legal technicality to escape from the dilemma, in which—it seems to me as an ordinary layman—he is placed by the words of the Act. The words are mandatory:

“The Council shall, before making any rules under this Act with respect to the conditions of admission to the register, consult with any Nursing Councils which may be established by Parliament for Scotland and Ireland respectively.”

That is with a view to a subsequent establishment of reciprocity. It is all very well for the Minister to say that the supplying of evidence is not part of the conditions of admission to the Register, but it is considered by the General Nursing Council of Scotland as being so germane to the subject under discussion that they say they cannot allow for reciprocity as long as Rule 9a is permitted to stand on the English Register. . . When it says it cannot give reciprocity on the conditions and the Rules approved by the Ministry of Health, I submit to the Minister that even though he may be in order, on the technical legal question involved, he is not so on the broader question as to what was intended by Parliament when it passed the Act. We debated the question at some length, as I well remember, and the general intention was that in order to provide reciprocity between the Councils in England and Scotland

respectively, these Councils should consult each other and make sure that admission to the one Register would, *ipso facto*, mean admission, with a few technical changes, to the other Register. . . . I claim that the broad object of this Section of the Act is not being fulfilled by the Rules at present laid on the Table of the House, because the prime governing consideration, namely, that the two Registers should be similar and parallel in all respects, is not being fulfilled. Therefore I do beg of the Minister to reconsider the matter, not from the merely legal point of view . . . but to take the broader view of what was intended by this House when it placed the Act on the Statute Book, namely, that the Scottish and the English Councils should consult with each other before passing Rules about the admission of nurses, so that this unfortunate *contretemps* which has occurred might be avoided. The very purpose of the Act is being defeated by this ruling. . . I do claim that the Scottish nurses are very closely concerned in this matter. The protest has come, not from any party or one section of nurses or another section of nurses, but from the body legally set up under an Act passed by this House. Can a protest of that nature be brushed aside in the perfunctory manner in which the Minister of Health has attempted to dismiss it? I protest against a reasoned letter from the Registrar of the Scottish Council being dismissed as a mare's nest.

SIR A. MOND: I have received no communication whatsoever from the Scottish Nursing Council.

CAPTAIN ELLIOT: It may be so. I do think that goes to prove the fact that this consultation, which was desired by the House when it passed this parallel Act, has not been carried out. The fact that there is such a protest is not in dispute. Everybody admits it. Many other Scottish Members have received protests. The very lack of co-ordination which this Section in the Act is intended to prevent—

SIR A. MOND: It is the fault of the Scottish Council.

CAPTAIN ELLIOT: I do claim that, in passing a new Rule, the onus of proof lies on the man who wishes to change the law. . . I forget what exact official position the Minister holds on the Nursing Council, or in relation to that Council, but he holds an official position in virtue of his office, and the Registrar of the Scottish Council has surely acted very rightly in indicating the decision of his Council to the corresponding body in England. At any rate, that that dispute has arisen and that that protest has been communicated to the English Council are not in dispute, and we do beg the Minister, at any rate, to meet us in this matter, or else, with the greatest reluctance in the world, we may be forced to divide the House on this very important matter, because it brings up the question of principle. I am sorry to detain the House, but it is a matter of great importance, both to the medical profession and the nursing profession, and

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