

## NURSES AND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE.

In the House of Commons, on April 4th, the Unemployment Insurance Bill was under the consideration of Standing Committee B.

On March 30th Major Barnett, always on the alert as to the Nurses' interests, supported by Captain Elliot and Mr. Hopkins, had down on the Orders of the Day the following motion to exempt Nurses from the provisions of the Act:—

To move the following Clause:—

Part II of the First Schedule to the principal Act, as amended by the Second Schedule to the Act of 1921, shall have effect as though there were inserted therein, after paragraph (b), the following new paragraphs:—

(bb) Employment as a Nurse for the Sick registered under the provisions of the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919, or of the Nurses' Registration (Scotland) Act, 1919;

(b) Employment as a Nurse Probationer in any hospital or infirmary.

Later, Mr. Leonard Lyle also put down a motion providing for nursing to be an exempted employment, which was subsequently amended in a way which brought it more nearly into line with Major Barnett's motion.

On Tuesday, April 4th, Mr. Lyle's motion appeared on the Orders for the Day as follows:—

To move the following Clause:—

(1) Part II of the First Schedule to the principal Act shall have effect as though there were inserted therein after paragraph (b) the following new paragraph:—

(bb) Employment as a female professional Nurse for the sick or as a female Probationer undergoing training for employment as such a Nurse.

(2) This section shall come into operation on the first day of July, nineteen hundred and twenty-two.

On Major Barnett rising to move his motion, Mr. Leonard Lyle asked on a point of order whether his motion would be out of order if Major Barnett's were carried.

The Chairman said both motions dealt with the same thing.

Major Barnett said that his object was to include in the list of those excepted from the provisions of the Act, Registered Nurses and Nurse Probationers. For the first time, in connection with nursing matters, he found himself more or less in agreement with the member for West Ham (Mr. Leonard Lyle). There was only this between them: his friend wished to leave out the provision that exempted nurses should be Registered Nurses. But it was the policy of the State to have a Register of Nurses. Was it too much to ask a nurse if she were qualified to go on the State Register to do so, and so make herself eligible for exemption? There they were on firm ground. From the time what was known as the "loose clause" for the admission of nurses to the Register ended there would be a great gulf between the registered and unregistered nurses. He wanted to appeal to his friends of the Labour Party, who had been the very good friends of the nurses in the House and the Lobby, to support

the exemption of nurses from the provisions of this Act. Why should probationers in training, who had no chance of being out of employment, pay out of their meagre salaries to support this Act for insurance against non-employment? When they came to consider who should be exempted, if the Committee thought the wider Clause better, and this view was supported by the Minister, he made his submission to the Minister, and would accept it.

Dr. Macnamara, Minister of Labour, said that every time one got a proposal to make a breach in an Act, it made it more difficult to resist others, but it was represented that this was an almost exceptional case, and the Acts did provide for a number of exceptions, *i.e.*, domestic servants and teachers. He thought there was justification for a basis of exclusion in some form or other. If one looked at the whole field of the number of nurses unemployed, last year 950 made application to Labour Exchanges. When they came to consider who should be included in a provision for exemption he thought the qualification of registration was too narrow; there were too many outside the Register. If you were going to exclude nurses, you must exclude them. The phrase "professional nurse for the sick" had its difficulties. The Minister might have to decide as to a claim in the event of an applicant not being exempted, and an appeal from his decision might be made to the High Court. On the whole, however, he was inclined to accept this definition.

Major Barnett accepted the Minister's view, and withdrew his amendment, and Lieut-Colonel Fremantle also withdrew an amendment he had put down.

Mr. Leonard Lyle then moved the Amendment standing in his name. He thanked the Minister of Labour for receiving the Amendments so sympathetically, and the member for South-West St. Pancras for meeting him in this matter. He was glad they were united. It was very necessary to make the terms of the Amendment of wider application than that of the nurses on the State Register, as that Register was a voluntary one, and many nurses would never go on to it.

Mr. William Graham, who seconded the Resolution, said his attention had been drawn to the question under discussion by a great number of his constituents.

Mr. Hayday, who spoke warmly of the value of the services of nurses, did not approve of the principle of exemptions, on the ground that if you kept taking the best lives out of a scheme you had the residue left, and that meant the amount they paid for insurance had to be increased, and those who could afford to pay least had to pay more. It was making the positions for the residue more desperate. Those who were in employment should help the unemployed. He had thought it right to say this, but he hoped he should not be misunderstood to be saying anything antagonistic to the nurses.

The motion providing that nursing should be an exempted employment was then carried, and will come before the House upon the Report stage.

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