

THE G.N.C. IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL AND NEW RULES 9 (A) AND 43 (2).

(Continued from page 224.)

In reviewing the statement made by Sir Alfred Mond (Minister of Health), in the House of Commons, on March 22nd, when advocating the new Rules 9 (A) and 43 (2), we proved in our issue of April 8th that the brief prepared for him was inspired by keen personal animus, and was untrue in many particulars. We touched on the Legal argument, the Thirty Years Struggle for Legal Status and Educational and Economic Rights against vested interests, described by the Minister as a "squabble" and a "feud." We proved that through the goodwill and public spirit of the Minority, with expert knowledge, they had done better constructive work in framing the Constitution and the Rules than the whole of the ignorant majority. And then we disproved the false reason given to the Minister for the disorganisation and delay in the office in registering applicants, many of whose application forms were put aside for months before the necessary references were applied for, because the work was not efficiently arranged and distributed by the Registrar, although a large staff of courteous and most willing workers were provided for the purpose.

THE REAL REASON FOR "SPEEDING UP REGISTRATION."

Very inaccurate figures were evidently given to the Minister, presumably from Headquarters. For instance, he told the House of Commons that "out of 50,000 nurses you have only 1,500 on the Register." There were, in fact, upwards of 3,000 nurses on the Register, and 1,400 waiting for their references to be secured. We quite agree with the Minister when he said, "It is important and necessary to have a speeding up of the machinery which will put nurses on the Register as rapidly as possible," but when he put forward the gratuitous insult that such lack of speed resulted from the conscientious scrutiny of the applications by the Chairman of the Registration Committee acting under instruction, he was repeating a false statement, calculated, we presume, to exonerate the real culprit, and to make the College policy possible—a policy to make it easy for nurse members of the College to place their names on the State Register without trouble to themselves, and to whitewash the male Executive Officers of the College who drafted the now notorious pledge, that if nurses registered with the College and paid a guinea they would be placed automatically on the State Register when the Bill was passed, without further fee. The fact was the College nurses in large numbers resented the broken pledge, and were determined to take no further trouble in the matter, and as the Election was drawing nigh, if the College Matrons were to be returned to power, it was imperative

that their followers should be passed on to the State Register without delay, and with the least possible trouble to themselves. Here comes in Dr. Goodall's system of second-hand entrants, incorporated in new Rule 9 (A), which provides that the General Nursing Council may stultify the past efficient method of registration, and substitute for it a shoddy system by which accuracy is to be sacrificed to speed, and make the College claim secure. The Supplementary Rule 43 (2) was drafted to remove persons from office on the Registration Committee who, it was well known, would have contested this job. With Dr. Goodall's new Rule in force and himself in the Chair of the Registration Committee, the nurses have been ruthlessly deprived of rightful recognition and of the prestige of a professionally signed Certificate.

Ignorance is a cardinal offence, and so far as professional nursing is concerned, ignorance is responsible at the Ministry of Health for its present intolerable policy. Its officials do not even realise that Nursing is an independent Profession, composed of citizens with the same rights and civic responsibilities as the Profession of Medicine. Nursing is not subordinate to Medicine. In the sick-room the nurse works under the direction of the medical practitioner, but outside the sick-room the nurse is a free British subject, and the medical practitioner is not responsible for her personal life and discipline. Apparently the Ministry of Health and its medical nominees on the General Nursing Council have still to grasp this fact. Anyway, it must be made plain to them that outside institution life, trained nurses are free citizens enjoying political rights and privileges, and they intend that the State Departments shall recognise them as such.

EXAMINATIONS AND PRIZES.

At the Royal Infirmary, Newcastle-on-Tyne, the prizes awarded as a result of the "Heath" examination were presented to the prize-winners. All 35 candidates satisfied the examiners, as did 25 who entered for the Cookery examination. The maximum marks for the Heath examination were 240 and for the cookery examination 100. The percentage gained was much higher than in the previous year.

The following nurses were the prize-winners:—

HEATH EXAMINATION.

1, Catherine Tyzack (207 marks), medal, £10, and Heath certificate; 2, Nellie Nesbit (192), £5; 3, Sarah Jane Anderson (189), £4; 4, Maggie Smith (188), £4; 5, Mary Annie Alton (186), £3; 6, Jean McGechan (185), £2; 7, (equal), Jean Gourlay (184), £1, and Florence Harrison (184), £1; 9, Murie Grace Gurden (183), £1; 10, Agnes Downie Anderson (182), £1; 11, Kathleen Alice Briggs (181), £1. Certificates only.—12, Alice Logan (178), 13, Elizabeth Ann Staveley (177); 14, (equal), Eva May Barfield (173) and Elsie May Dodds (173); 16 (equal), Isabella Dickinson (172) and Connie Bella Cranwell (172); 18 (equal), Helen Ann Harvey (171) and Jean M'Vicar Anderson (171).

COOKERY EXAMINATION.

1, Ruth Alice Groom (86), £2; 2, Katherine Hutchinson (84), £1; 3, Ellen Crow (83), £1; 4 (equal), Olga M. Hodgson (82), 10s., and R. M. Braunton (82), 10s.

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