

## THE REGISTERED NURSES PARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL.

A largely attended, earnest, and enthusiastic meeting of the Registered Nurses Parliamentary Council was held at 431, Oxford Street, London, W., on Saturday last, April 29th, at which Councillor Beatrice Kent presided. A large amount of business was discussed and put through.

### Correspondence.

A number of letters from heads of Government Departments and Members of Parliament were presented by the Hon. Secretary.

Many letters of regret at inability to attend were received.

Miss L. C. Cooper wrote:—

"I sincerely hope our Members of Parliament will be able to see before too late the injustice to our profession if the medical men and laity are still to govern us. Who have the medical profession to govern them in their Councils? Not nurses or the outside public. Therefore why should they be thrust on us?"

LETTER SENT BY COUNCILLOR BEATRICE KENT, PRESIDENT OF THE REGISTERED NURSES' PARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL TO THE MINISTER OF HEALTH.

The following letter, sent by the President to the Minister of Health, was read, and is here printed by special request:—

431, Oxford Street, London, W.1,  
March 28th, 1922.

To the Right Hon. Sir Alfred Mond.

SIR,—I was in the Members' Gallery of the House of Commons on Wednesday night, March 22, when Major Barnett moved an address to His Majesty to annul the new Rules passed by the majority on the General Nursing Council.

It was a great satisfaction to me to hear the subject matter of actions, fundamentally and morally wrong, exposed to the light of criticism in "The People's House." Allow me to draw your attention to a few important facts:—

(1) The Nurses' Registration Act for England and Wales was placed on the Statute Book for two specific purposes: (a) For the benefit of the sick public, and (b) to safeguard the interests of trained nurses. Any attempt to disregard these principles must and will be resisted by conscientious persons on the General Nursing Council.

To call such resistance a "mare's nest" will not dispose of a matter of such vital importance.

(2) There is no "Royal College of Nurses" as you stated in the House, but there is a limited liability company called the *College of Nursing, Ltd.* Also there is a *Royal British Nurses' Association*, the only Association of Nurses possessing a Royal Charter, and which was in existence many years before the Company alluded to was heard of.

(3) The Register of the College of Nursing is valueless in respect of Rule 9A, for the following reason:—The names of persons not holding certificates of professional proficiency are entered upon the Register as possessing them; therefore, in view of this fact, we hold the view, that the Secretary of the College of Nursing, Ltd., is

not competent to determine by a signed declaration to the General Nursing Council, whether or not a nurse is eligible for the State Register, therefore:—

(4) Rule 9A is quite obviously open to many abuses.

(5) The Nurses' Registration Act for England and Wales has been violated by the majority on the General Nursing Council. See Section 6 (3) and Major Barnett's speech proving it.

(6) You remarked in the House that: "The New Rule (9A) neither raises nor lowers the standard of qualifications." No, not in a direct manner, but it makes it easily possible for persons, not having the necessary qualifications, to be placed on the Register, as I have just proved to you.

Of the many things that astonished me, which were spoken in the House on the night in question, two remarks from yourself stand out in my memory as supremely amazing, namely:—(a) "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."

The implication of your words is quite unmistakable. You consented to receive a deputation from a *Statutory Council*, who came to you *without the knowledge or consent of their colleagues, and you promised to support them!* Persons who went on strike for ten weeks, and by making a quorum impossible, prevented the conscientious minority from doing their duty! And you are surprised, Sir, that nurses are not coming on to the Register!

Your other astonishing revelation was that you threatened the House that you would move to repeal the Act!

If our form of Government has become a dictatorship, the electors must know it and insist upon constitutionalism, otherwise the oft-threatened revolution will certainly come.

I remain, Sir, yours truly,

BEATRICE KENT.

The attention of the Council was drawn to the fact that Lieut.-Col. Leslie O. Wilson, who acted as one of the tellers for the Noes in the House of Commons on March 22nd in the division on Major Barnett's motion "that an humble address be presented to His Majesty praying that two new Rules of the General Nursing Council, Rules 9A and 43 (2) may be annulled," proposed to contest the St. George's Division of Westminster, in which the headquarters of the Registered Nurses Parliamentary Council are situated, at the next General Election.

In view of the fact of this active opposition of Colonel Wilson to the interests of the nurses, it was decided that the policy of the Council should be to oppose his candidature, and to support that of the present member, Mr. James Monteith Erskine, who went into the Division Lobby with Major Barnett.

In this connection it is interesting to note that Mr. Erskine, in an address to his constituents, writes: "You have to choose between myself (a Conservative independent of the Coalition) and a St. George's man with no personal axe to grind, as against a Lloyd George Conservative who is an utter stranger to the constituency, and who draws, I believe, a salary of £2,000 a year to help to keep the Coalition in power."

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