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EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

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## EDITORIAL.

### THE ELECTION FIASCO.

For the past nine months the newly appointed Registration Committee, with its medical Chairman, has in the spirit of intolerable arrogance played ducks and drakes with Registration questions, and this week ends with the Election Fiasco. The one aim and object, to the exclusion of vitally important business of the Committee, appears to have been its burning endeavour to rush on to the Register—in time to record their votes for the new Council—members of the College of Nursing, Ltd., with the object of securing the control of the Nurses' Governing Body. Thus letters addressed to the Council have been intercepted and held over for three months, and matters which should now be in working order deferred. One of the most important things needing the consideration of the Council in all its details was the "prescribed scheme" provided for in the Schedule of the Act (Constitution of Council) for the Election of the sixteen persons, being persons registered as nurses, to form, with nominees, the new Council; and yet many of the all-important regulations and papers referring to this matter were not circulated to members of the Council in time for due consideration, and were hustled through at the last meeting with most drastic and objectionable recommendations from the Ministry of Health, without time for objections being given.

The Chairman of the Council, as Returning Officer, accepted the office only when entrenched behind a Ministerial regulation indemnifying him against any and every form of irregularity, not to say illegality, in the conduct of the Election.

Thus it will only be with the greatest difficulty that the nurses can protect themselves from the most flagrant irregularity in the conduct of the Election for the new Council.

First, only seven postal days were allowed the nurses in which to record their votes. (We believe the General Medical Council allows three weeks.)

Then the Ballot was declared to be secret.

But what do we find? Many hundreds of voting papers which should have reached the electors on December 1st are still undelivered on December 5th, and by noon, December 8th, they must reach the Office or be thrown aside. In many instances, therefore, it is impossible for a nurse to record her vote.

Dozens of nurses have received two Voting Papers.

Now we come to the secrecy of the Ballot. On opening our Voting Paper it is found that a place has been provided for a "number," and the paper is to be so folded that this number is to be outside and catch the eye.

Imagine the consternation of an economically dependent and timorous electorate which has been bombarded from all directions by employers and dispensers of patronage, and told how and for whom to vote. Through a secret ballot, as provided in the Rules, Registered Nurses had hoped to record their votes without coercion, but with the violation of the secrecy of the ballot they must obey orders or perhaps suffer professional damage.

Two members of the Council this week interviewed the Chairman and placed the case before him. They invited him to hold a new election; to issue Voting Papers which would preserve the sanctity of the ballot; and give time for Registered Nurses to receive, consider and return their Voting Papers.

Though not defending the irregularities, the Chairman did not consider he had power to cancel the Election. Perhaps after consultation with the Minister of Health this deplorable fiasco may be remedied. If not, we hope the Registered Nurses will avail themselves of an appeal to the Minister of Health, and insist upon the Election being conducted in a legal manner. What is imperative is (1) that three weeks be given in which to record votes; (2) that the absolute secrecy of the ballot shall be maintained; (3) that the various unions of employers shall not be permitted through the Matrons to coerce junior officials, and thus tamper with the liberty of the subject.

PLEASE READ IMPORTANT NOTICE ON PAGE 378.

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