

THE GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL ELECTION. GENERAL CONFUSION.

We are not surprised that nurses with the best intentions in the world "don't know where they are" so far as the Election of the General Nursing Council is concerned; and that very general indignation has been aroused that, although officially announced that Registered Nurses would receive their Voting Papers "by the 1st of December," none, as far as we can learn, were received before the 2nd, and many not until a later date. These papers have then, in many instances, to be forwarded from a permanent address to the nurse's present place of residence—so that it is doubtful if they will be received in time to consider and return, as the Registration Committee and Returning Officer only allowed *seven* days for this important Election to a Statutory Body—far too short a time for so migratory a class as professional nurses, and disfranchising every registered nurse resident outside the Kingdom, even in the Islands and in Ireland.

Then the nurses were promised a Secret Ballot, and are warned on their Voting Papers that, "If the voter places any mark on this ballot paper by which she may be afterwards identified, the whole ballot paper will be null and void and will not be counted," yet on the back sheet appears the notice—

Number _____

BALLOT PAPER I FOR GENERAL NURSES.

This Ballot Paper must be folded so that this number is shown.

Naturally, the recipient at once asks, "What number?" No explanation is given on the sheet. Then, of course, if the voter places her registered number or the mysterious number which appears on the Identification Envelope, then *the Ballot is not secret*, and thousands of working women hesitated to vote according to conviction for fear of economic injury—as their employers, through the College of Nursing, Ltd., and the Hospital Matrons' Union, had selected eleven candidates and by numerous printed statements had practically intimidated to the Registered Nurses who they were to vote for—and unless the Ballot was secret, thousands of nurses dare not disregard these directions, as they are convinced their livelihood and promotion depends upon obedience.

Knowing as we do the part played by the autocratic Officers of the College in their determination to capture and control the Registered Nurses' Governing Body, can we blame these women whose power to earn a living might be jeopardised by voting for the Independent Candidates? Anyway, they are convinced they will be penalised if they venture to exercise their right of selection. The scandal is that, by requiring from them an identification number on the Ballot Paper, they were faced with one more evidence of the tricky methods of management of the Registration Committee, against which the

minority on the General Nursing Council have had to fight for the past nine months.

We are informed by the Returning Officer that the printing on the back of the Voting Paper providing for a nurse to insert a Number, was placed there by mistake, and no notice will be taken of it when counting the votes. That may be, but this deplorable error has aroused a sense of fear in the minds of many voters who were assured the Ballot was Secret, and has no doubt caused them not to vote, or to vote according to the directions of their Matrons, and not according to their convictions.

Every class of nurse has been circularised in connection with the election.

First, a group of ten Matrons have addressed circulars to "State Registered Nurses," and to "College Members who are State Registered Nurses" respectively, urging them to vote for the Joint Committee's candidates.

The letter is signed by Miss E. C. Barton, Matron, Chelsea Infirmary (Poor Law Nurses); Miss Margaret Hogg, Matron, Guy's Hospital, London; Miss Corser-Brown, Matron, Royal Infirmary, Newcastle-on-Tyne; Miss Florence Cann, Matron, Norfolk and Norwich Hospital; Miss E. Steele Innes, Matron, General Infirmary, Leeds (Hospital Nurses); Dame Maud McCarthy (Territorial Army Nurses), Miss A. M. Peterkin (Queen's Nurses), Miss M. S. Rundle, Secretary, College of Nursing, Ltd. Also Miss Louisa K. Bowden and Miss Grace Corder.

We are of opinion that senior officers in institutions should carefully avoid coercing the nurses under their control.

Next, Dame Sidney Browne has been busy urging upon Army Nurses "the extreme importance of exercising their votes at the coming election for the General Nursing Council," and needless to say enclosing the list of College candidates. As Dame Sidney is not a State Registered Nurse, it is difficult to understand what ground she has for interfering with those who are.

Miss Lloyd Still then appeals to St. Thomas' Trained Nurses to record their votes, and, of course, the College list is the one which should be supported.

Miss Cox-Davies issues an Address in support of the Joint Committee's candidates, concluding: "I earnestly ask you to consider this matter very carefully, and to record your Vote without fail at the forthcoming elections to the General Nursing Council. (Signed) R. Cox-Davies, President." Coming events *may* cast their shadows before, but at present Miss Cox-Davies does not hold that position.

Then various candidates have also issued addresses until the bewildered electorate wonder whether the election is so free and open as all these ladies, who so earnestly impress upon them the importance of voting for the Matrons' candidates, would have them believe.

For whom shall they vote?

The women who won the Nurses' Registration Act.

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