

## NURSING IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

The following questions have been addressed to the Ministry of Health. We quote from the Parliamentary Debates, of February 21st and 22nd:—

### NURSES' REGISTRATION.

#### THE ONE YEAR'S TRAINING.

1.—MR. F. BRIANT (Lib., Lambeth N.), asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Overseas' Trade Department, as representing the Ministry of Health, if the proposals of the Nursing Council include the registration of nurses with less than one year's hospital training; and if, in the interests of the general public who will regard registration as a guarantee of efficiency, he will refuse to assent to any proposals which will thus lower the standard of nursing?

SIR W. JOYNSON-HICKS: The late Council submitted a rule, which has for some time been in operation in Scotland, giving them a discretion in exceptional cases to admit nurses with less than one year's training. My right hon. Friend has asked the new Council to reconsider this proposal, and until he has received their recommendations it would be premature to make any statement.

*Remarks.*—Mr. Briant, Chairman of the Lambeth Board of Guardians, has always held very sound views on the training and status of nurses, and we welcome his vigilance in the House in questioning the attempt of the College members on the General Nursing Council to sweep away any standard of general training—or even general experience—to qualify for registration on the General Part of the Register—and thus break faith with the 16,000 nurses who have registered under the present Statutory Rules—and of whose contract we note the present Minister of Health is apparently not oblivious.

In the reply given to Mr. Briant an error appears. The Scottish Rule 21 (3) (d), to which Sir W. Joynson-Hicks alludes, does not permit the General Nursing Council for Scotland "to admit nurses to the Register with less than one year's training," but provides that one year's training may have been taken "in a hospital or institution not recognised by the Council." Thus persons with no "general" training are eligible to be placed on the "General Part of the Register" without such practical experience. A very objectionable provision, calculated to mislead the public, and strongly objected to by the non-College nurse members in the first Council.

#### PREFERENTIAL TERMS FOR COLLEGE MEMBERS.

2.—MR. R. RICHARDSON (Lab., Houghton-le-Spring) asked the representative of the Ministry of Health whether he is aware that applications from nurses connected with the College of Nursing to be placed upon the Register were dealt with before similar applications from working nurses, which had been received five, six and nine months earlier, and that about 800 nurses applied before September 30th last, the specified date, but were not placed upon the Register in time to vote, in consequence of a delay on the part of the officials in sending out their reference papers; and whether he will make inquiry into this complaint?

SIR W. JOYNSON-HICKS: My right hon. Friend will have inquiry made, and will communicate the result to the hon. Member.

*Remarks.*—Rule 9 (A) was drafted and agreed upon by the majority members of the G.N.C. when on strike, and thrust through the Council, and, although quite *ultra vires*, through Parliament by Sir Alfred Mond, to facilitate members of the College of Nursing, Ltd., being placed upon the Register, *in time to vote* for College candidates on the new Council—a most discreditable job. We hope Mr. Richardson will not be fobbed off by the usual type of reply (often inaccurate) and strongly biased, in support of College policy, supplied, in the past, from the Ministry of Health.

Members of the late Council have written evidence of preferential treatment accorded to members of the College of Nursing over independent applicants—the case of Miss Geraldine Bremner, now a member of the Council, is a flagrant case—and the disfranchisement of 800 applicants owing to the "meticulous and ridiculous" bureaucracy in the G.N.C. Office, through which system applicants are kept waiting for months, is evidence of the grave mismanagement of our Register.

#### THE "ANTI"-MONOPOLY.

3.—MR. P. W. GRUNDY (Lab., Rother Valley) asked the representative of the Ministry of Health whether he has received a resolution from the Professional Union of Trained Nurses expressing indignation at the manner in which Mrs. Bedford Fenwick has been excluded from the General Nursing Council by the arrangement of the College of Nursing, and protesting against this lady, who originated the idea of registration and worked for it for over 30 years, being superseded by two College Matrons, one of whom has always strenuously opposed registration, and declaring the method adopted constituted a scandal requiring searching inquiry; and whether he proposes to take any action in the matter?

SIR W. JOYNSON-HICKS: Representations have been received on behalf of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick and other candidates who failed to secure election. All the candidates received the support of one or other of the nursing organisations, and my right hon. Friend is not aware that the College of Nursing took any action in regard to the election which was not strictly legitimate. As regards the conduct of the election, a formal appeal has been lodged, and until my right hon. Friend has given his decision it would be improper to make any comment on the action of the Returning Officer.

*Remarks.*—We deprecate our name being used in this connection, as we have no desire to make the late election a personal matter; the great principles involved in its misdirection must be contested, and if possible prevented in the future.

Sir W. Joynson-Hicks has been misinformed in several particulars. The College of Nursing, Ltd., inspired the framing of Rule 9 (A), which provided for packing the Register with College voters, which may be strictly legitimate, but is calculated to debase professional *morale*. Also the Independent candidates were not nominated by any Nurses' organisation, as the College candidates were, and therefore had no exclusive support. They quite realised that the method of registration under Rule 9 (A), which was proposed by Dr. Goodall, the Chairman of the Registration Committee, would exclude them, as it was designed to do, from election. As we remarked before, a flagrant job.

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