

NURSING IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

The following questions were addressed by members of the House of Commons to the Minister of Health, before the rising of Parliament on March 29th:—

TUESDAY, MARCH 27TH, 1923.

General Nursing Council (Staff).

MR. T. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister of Health whether, as all the nurses who are heads of the General Nursing Council office staff are members of the College of Nursing, Limited, he can state if it is intended that all the highly paid posts shall, with his approval, be kept exclusively for members of that limited liability company, or whether other registered nurses who do not belong to it are to be allowed to participate in the work of the council in some of the remunerative posts created from time to time?

MR. CHAMBERLAIN: Except as regards the appointment of Registrar and as regards numbers of staff and scales of salary, I have no jurisdiction over appointments to the staff of the General Nursing Council and no information as to the intentions of the Council in the matter.

Remarks.—Nepotism is now rampant in the nursing appointments for the highly paid posts in the General Nursing Council Office, and we refer in another column to the latest job. At the last meeting of the Council it agreed that a sinecure post carrying a salary at the rate of £250, should not be advertised, and should be made by the General Purposes Committee without reference to the Council. This post has been filled, we hear, by the appointment of a close personal friend of the Chairman of that Committee and the Registrar, who not only holds a pension of £250 per annum, but has substantial private means. We hope Mr. Chamberlain will enquire into this appointment, as it is a very serious scandal.

MR. A. HAYDAY asked the Minister of Health whether, in consideration of the fact that in October, 1922, the registered nurses of England and Wales were paying the salaries of a staff of 30 persons in the General Nursing Council offices, including a Registrar at £550, an assistant registrar at £300, a registration clerk at £260, and a registrar's secretary at £250 per annum, and this although less than 7,000 names are included in the first register, he will state what necessity there was for calling in an expert to set the General Nursing Council office in order after it had been running nearly one and a half years; how long did this gentleman take for this work; and what was the cost to the nurses?

MR. C. AMBERLAIN: I am informed that the expert was called in as the result of a unanimous decision of the Council at the end of last September. The report was received on November 24th. The cost was £83. The matter was wholly within the powers of the Council and it is not for me to express any views as to the necessity of the step taken.

Remarks.—The lack of efficient organisation in the office of the General Nursing Council has been apparent from its inception, and any suggestions for reform bitterly resented by the Registrar. Indeed, it was this intolerance of expert help and advice upon the part of members of the Council which projected the strike in 1921, and

which has brought our Council into the well-deserved contempt of a large section of the nursing profession. Nurses wait months and months for registration by the Registrar, who, under the Cox-Davies Instruction, has absolute power of recommending applications to the Council—the Registration Committee having no practical power, being compelled to send forward applications approved by the Registrar. Moreover, after months of delay the registered nurses have to again wait more months for their certificates, which are held up for the signature of two medical men, the Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of the Registration Committee. As for investigation by a so-called expert, £83 pounds is a mere flea-bite for his ten days' work and report, and when all is said and done, under the present administration the same lack of "system" is inevitable. Always the nurse pays, as the nurses' money is largely administered by nominated members of the Council who have no financial responsibility in supplying funds. We cannot agree that the Minister of Health has no responsibility for the conduct of business, especially where finance is concerned, of this Statutory Council, which is largely under the control of his Department.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28TH, 1923.

Nurses' Register.

MR. ROBERT RICHARDSON asked the Minister of Health why the General Nursing Council for England and Wales has only printed and published in the middle of March, 1923, its first Register, in view of the fact that No. 7 of the rules sanctioned by Parliament explicitly states that this shall be issued as soon as possible after the 1st July, 1922, and as soon as possible after the 1st January of the year 1923, and of each subsequent year, and, as this rule gives no sanction for the publication of two Registers in the year 1923, on what date will the second register appear; whether, in view of the fact that the first published Register has only been issued this month, he will state what authority the General Nursing Council for England and Wales has in sending out notices to registered nurses demanding a retention fee, when, by No. 5 of the rules sanctioned by Parliament, it is only required from a nurse who desires her name to be retained on the Register for any year subsequent to the first year in which it is included in the published register; and whether, as this notice was sent from the General Nursing Council offices as far back as August, 1922, and as many nurses have paid whose names are not on first Register, and who, therefore, according to the present rules, are only required to pay this fee on or before the 30th September, 1924, he will, to avoid confusion, direct that all retention fees illegally obtained before the middle of March, 1923, be returned to the registered nurses, especially in view of the fact that the General Nursing Council for Scotland, in the parallel case, has given notice that it does not require a retention fee for 1922, and has, it is understood, returned to its nurses those already paid?

MR. CHAMBERLAIN: I am informed that the first Register has been printed and published as soon after 1st July, 1922, as was possible. It is the Register for 1922. The second Register, which will be that dating from 1st January, 1923, is now in the printer's hands. I am informed that no nurses have been requested to pay the retention fee whose names are not on the first

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