

## THE REGISTERED NURSES' PARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL.

A meeting of the above Council, held at 431, Oxford Street, W., on April 14th (Councillor Beatrice Kent in the Chair), was convened in support of the rights of Probationers to a "prescribed scheme of training" under the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919, preparatory to State Examination and Registration, and to take action to secure this statutory right for all nurses in training.

### Illegal Proceedings of the New General Nursing Council.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick gave a resumé of how the Chairman and the new General Nursing Council had mishandled this matter and acted, in her opinion, in an illegal manner. On three occasions the late Council had reaffirmed its approval of issuing a statutory and compulsory Syllabus of Training for nurses in training for State examination in general and supplementary nursing to qualify for State Registration, and requested succeeding Ministers of Health to approve and sign the Syllabus—recommendations which were presumably placed before Ministers by the First Secretary of the Ministry of Health.

In spite of these recommendations the new Council at once repudiated the policy of its predecessors, and supported by a large majority the Chairman's futile recommendation that the Syllabus of general training should be merely "advisory" and not "compulsory" as provided by the Nurses' Registration Act.

Thus to placate the managers of inferior training schools—who were presumably failing to provide their probationers with efficient professional education—the probationers who entered all general hospitals and Poor Law Infirmaries for training, were to be deprived of their legal right to a uniform standard of nursing education and training, and would have no redress whatever, if general Training Schools failed to provide standardised educational facilities, qualifying their pupils for the State Examination, which they must pass before State Registration. If in consequence these probationers were unable to pass the State Examination, their professional careers would after three years' strenuous service be ruined.

Mrs. Fenwick reported, with regret, that the present Minister of Health, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, had agreed to the decision of the new General Nursing Council to issue an "advisory" Syllabus, and thus permit them to ignore Rule 3 (2) (a) of the Act.

The Minister had also refused to receive a deputation from the R.N.P.C. in support of the Probationers' Statutory rights. She therefore saw no other alternative but to concentrate by every means in their power—through publicity and by appealing to Parliament—to compel the

General Nursing Council (the minority of which was strongly in favour of justice to trainees) to carry out the provisions of the Nurses' Registration Act. The time was long passed when enfranchised workers need humbly submit to the illegal and autocratic control of privileged persons, Ministerial or otherwise. Parliament had granted to the Nursing Profession valuable rights and privileges in their Registration Act, and they must demand them.

The members present warmly endorsed this policy, and it was agreed: (1) To place their rightful demands in writing before the Minister of Health—as he refused them a personal interview; (2) To acquaint Members of Parliament with the fact that Statutory Rights granted by Parliament to the public and to nurses in training were being withheld by the new General Nursing Council, with the consent of the Ministry of Health, and (3) To hold a Public Meeting to protest against the autocracy assumed under medical dictation by the General Nursing Council, in withholding from nurses in training rights and privileges granted to them by Parliament, to the injury of the general community, who were deeply concerned in attaining a high standard of nursing skill through the Nurses' Registration Acts, one important purpose for which they had been established.

### NEPOTISM IN THE GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL.

It was resolved to forward to the Chairman and General Nursing Council, and to the Minister of Health a Resolution protesting against the irregular appointment of Miss Dora Finch to the unskilled and lucrative post of "Interviewing Officer," as the directions to the General Purposes Committee *re* the appointment had been ignored in placing this lady in office, and to demand that, as the Registered Nurses are called upon to finance the work of the Council, that all lucrative professional appointments, including that of Interviewing Officer, should be advertised and suitable candidates, other than the close personal friends of the Registrar and members of the General Purposes Committee, be made acquainted with vacancies, as is usual with other Statutory Bodies.

### LETTER TO MISS M. BREAY.

Upon the proposal of Miss A. Cattell, it was unanimously agreed to send a letter, which the President consented to write, to Miss M. Breay, Hon. Secretary, expressing the deep concern of those present to learn of her motor accident, and to wish her a speedy and complete recovery.

### ORGANIZING SUB-COMMITTEE.

A Sub-Committee to organize prompt action was appointed as follows:—Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Miss Beatrice Kent, Miss Isabel Macdonald, R.B.N.A., Miss Lord, N.U.T.N., Miss Maud MacCallum, P.U.T.N.

The meeting then terminated.

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