

That the new Minister of Health should have been advised to substitute an Advisory for a Compulsory Syllabus means that the Nursing Profession has not only been treated with contempt, and deprived of the rights granted to it by Parliament, but that Nursing Education remains in exactly the same chaotic condition as it was before the Nurses' Registration Act was passed in 1919, and we owe this disastrous position to the treachery and cowardice of the new Council, the College members of which have foresworn themselves in thus failing to support the Syllabus the majority of them helped to draft; by ranging themselves with a clique of reactionary employers, who have no right, owing to lack of knowledge, to define standards of Nursing Education.

When this information from the Minister was cursorily reported by the Chairman to the Council it is much to be regretted that the five Independent members, who voted against this illegal policy on March 16th last, did not, one after the other, rise and reaffirm their conviction that the nurses have a right to a prescribed Scheme of Training under the Act, and that the majority of the new Council in attempting to deprive them of it must look for opposition inside and outside the Council by members so convinced.

FINANCE.

From the Finance Report we note that a huge expenditure is still going on, but in spite of the fact that thirty persons on the Office Staff are still being paid by the nurses, thousands of nurses have to wait for months before being registered, and thousands, we presume, will consequently not find their names on the Register for 1923, when this belated publication—already four months overdue—makes its appearance.

The thousands expended on the salaries of thirty persons, and at the rate of £2,400 on stamps annually, require very close supervision, and should make members of the Council realise that unless some method of economy is inaugurated a day of reckoning is not far off. Indeed, the surplus fees of the Existing Nurses, which should have been invested for future income, will hardly, at this rate, amount to a row of pins.

REGISTRATION.

Under the Riddell regime, 6,051 nurses are still waiting for registration, and we should imagine that a late Minister of Health would have to find some stronger words than "meticulous and ridiculous" for the present arrears, and denial to qualified nurses of the right to Registration under the present intolerable bureaucracy.

NURSING IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL: TRAINING SCHOOLS & PROBATIONERS CERTIFICATES.

MR. C. ROBERTS, in the House of Commons, on Friday, asked the Minister of Health whether he was aware that there are several Poor-Law Infirmaries throughout the country, of which Tonbridge Poor-Law Infirmary is one, which were sanctioned by the Ministry of Health as minor training schools and accepted for membership by the College of Nursing, and which have up to the present been able to grant certificates to Pro-

bationers when trained as fully qualified Nurses; whether the General Nursing Council has proposed a new rule whereby no Nurse can be placed on the Register unless trained at a Hospital or Infirmary with a Resident Medical Officer, which would debar these Infirmaries from granting adequate certificates in future; whether he proposes to sanction this rule of the General Nursing Council; and whether, notwithstanding that this new rule may be approved, the Probationers at present being trained can be assured that their certificates which, on their engagements, were definitely promised to them at the end of their training, will qualify them to sit for the State examination which entitles them to being placed on the State Register.

LORD E. PERCY: The Tonbridge Infirmary and certain others have been recognised by the Ministry as minor training schools, but my right hon. friend has no information as to their recognition by the College of Nursing. The General Nursing Council submitted a rule in the sense indicated, but they were informed that it was not competent to them to make any rule limiting their discretion in dealing with individual applications. Any institution which is refused approval by the Council has a right of appeal to the Minister of Health, and he cannot at this stage express any opinion on cases which may come before him on appeal. In any event, the decision of the Council will not affect the recognition by the Ministry of certificates obtained by Probationers now under training in the institutions concerned.

REMARKS.

As the new Council has denied the right to a "prescribed training" to probationers, who will have to submit to, and pass, a State Examination, and any curriculum—good, bad, or indifferent—may be adopted by so-called training schools, as there is no compulsory Syllabus for general training, little Poor Law Infirmaries can do just as they please. Moreover, the Nurses Registration Act has no provision prohibiting hospitals and infirmaries from granting certificates to their pupils if they choose to continue to do so. Until nurses have their right to a Syllabus of Training enforced they are in exactly the same helpless and hopeless position as to professional education as they were before the Act was passed—that is, at the mercy of the unprofessional employer.

STATUTORY RIGHT REFUSED.

MR. EDWARDS asked the Minister of Health whether he is aware that, in spite of the rule of the General Nursing Council that all minutes, registers and records shall be open to the inspection of members of the Council during the Registrar's business hours, two representatives of the working Nurses on the Council were, by the Chairman's orders, refused permission to inspect documents in connection with the compilation of the register; and whether he will make inquiry into the complaint and take whatever steps are necessary to secure compliance with the rule.

LORD E. PERCY: My right hon. friend will cause inquiry to be made and will communicate further with the hon. member in due course.

REMARKS.

Lord Eustace Percy should have been supplied by the Ministry of Health with a sufficient and straightforward reply to this question. Both Miss Isabel Macdonald and Miss Alice Cattell, when members of the General Nursing Council, were denied access to documents in the office by the Registrar, Miss Riddell, and by the Chairman of the Council, which, under Rule 49, they had a right to inspect. The conduct of these two officials was not only highly offensive and autocratic, but illegal, and if Mr. Edwards requires evidence and information on the matter, which is apparently not forthcoming from the Ministry of Health, we can supply him with details.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)