

fulfil the requirements of the Rule. She had five years' subsequent experience in that nursing home, she takes complete charge of the nursing home in the absence of the matron, is in complete charge of the operating theatre, assists the first surgeons of the land in the most delicate and difficult operations on the human body, and has under her charge and direction—and this is the extraordinary thing—registered nurses, although she herself is not eligible for the register. The position is really too ludicrous as it stands, and I do submit that some change ought to be sanctioned. The Address now before the House makes proposals whereby efficiency, character, and training of the necessary kind would be provided and safeguarded. This body of worthy noble women, doing a very fine service to humanity, should not be practically deprived of their livelihood, because that is really what it comes to. It is true that technically, and by the Rules, they are not prevented hereafter from practising their profession for gain, but that is only true in a very limited sense.

The Medical Committee of the House has already had brought to its notice the case of women who because they cannot get on the register are not even eligible to apply for various nursing appointments. That condition of affairs is going to be increased. In five or six years' time in all probability a nurse who is not on the register will find it practically impossible to gain a livelihood. Never before in the history of legislation has Parliament deliberately prevented persons in *bona fide* practice, with good experience and training, from earning a livelihood by creating a Registration Act. It has always allowed those persons, with proper safeguards, to go upon the register, though it has guarded the entry of other persons by stringent safeguards, such as certificates of training and so on. I earnestly appeal to the House not to continue to inflict this injustice on a very worthy body of women.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH (Mr. Neville Chamberlain): I feel the House must be in some confusion as to what it is exactly that we are debating, more especially because of the Amendment of the Resolution which has been forced upon the hon. Member in order to put himself in order. The modifications do not really alter the substance of the Motion, but merely put it into order by making it in the form of an Amendment of the Rule instead of the addition of a new Rule. The Rule I have approved, the new Rule, which has been made by the General Nursing Council, is identical with the Motion in the name of the hon. and gallant Member for St. Albans (Lieut.-Colonel Fremantle), with the exception that in the third line of (g) the date is 1st January, 1900, instead of 1910. This is a highly controversial matter. These controversies almost invariably arise when you try to stabilise a profession which hitherto has had no general standard, but there is this difference between the case of the nurses we are now considering and the cases which have previously been dealt with, such as the midwives or the

dentists, in that under those provisions people could not practise the profession at all unless they came on the register. That is not so under the Act which we are considering. There is nothing in the Act to prevent a nurse from practising her profession, even if she be not on the register. There is a very definite distinction between these two cases. I am not prepared to deny that the fact that there are some nurses on the register who are entitled to call themselves registered nurses, and others who are ineligible for the register, does inflict some hardship upon certain nurses; but the hon. Member's Motion appears to me to go a great deal too far. He proposes in paragraph (c) that nurses who can obtain a certificate signed by a registered nurse and two medical men should have the right of entry upon the register. That takes away from the General Nursing Council the discretion which is given to them under the Rule which I have approved of under the Motion in the name of the hon. Member for St. Albans.

I am not sure whether this Motion is not inconsistent with the Statute, but as the Chair has not raised that point, I do not want to press anything in the nature of a technicality. I prefer to argue the case upon its merits. It must be remembered that about 27,000 nurses have already applied for entry upon the register. These nurses have applied for entry on the understanding that the conditions were those that have been laid down by the General Nursing Council. If it had been suggested to them at the time they made their application that it was possible to bring in a large number of other nurses under such a proposal as this—nurses who had had no hospital training, and as to whose qualifications they would probably have a good deal to say—I am not at all sure that they would have applied for registration. Certainly, if at the last moment, by a regulation of this kind, I am to interfere with the powers of the General Nursing Council, there would be, on the part of those who have already obtained entry upon the register, an accusation that there had been a breach of faith, and that the value of the register to them had been most seriously diminished by the importation of all these other nurses who were not up to their standard.

DR. CHAPPLE: The Act actually makes provision for existing nurses. There can be no breach of faith towards the nurses who are now upon the register by doing justice to the other nurses for whom the Act makes special provision. The Act says that Rules shall be made

"enabling persons who, within a period of two years after the date on which the Rules to be made under the provisions of this paragraph first come into operation, make an application in that behalf (in this Act referred to as 'an existing nurse's application') to be admitted to the Register."

MR. CHAMBERLAIN: Yes, but those nurses have to be nurses who are

"*bona fide* engaged in practice as nurses in attendance upon the sick, under conditions which appear to the Council to be satisfactory for the purposes of this pro-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)