

MR. PRINGLE: Paragraph (e), which I read to the House, does not require training for existing nurses.

MAJOR BARNETT: The hon. Member for Dumfries did not put it in that way. He said the Act laid down that there should be no training. What the Act says is that they should have adequate knowledge and experience of nursing the sick, and that it is for the General Nursing Council to decide what is adequate experience.

DR. CHAPPLE: What I really said was, that the provision for the training of nurses is already set out in the Act but when it comes to the existing nurses, it deliberately leaves out the question of training. The reference to the Nursing Council is imported against the meaning of the Sub-section.

MAJOR BARNETT: With great respect, what the hon. Member said was, that the Act laid down that there should be no training. The crux of the matter is the question of what is adequate knowledge of the nursing of the sick and who is to be the authority to decide. The hon. Member wants to set up an authority, and he sets up that authority in an Ollendorffian manner. It is to consist of two medical men and a registered nurse. It reminds one of the lessons in the old Ollendorf books. "Do you know German?" "No, but I have an uncle who plays the German flute." In this case the question is, "Have you adequate knowledge and experience?" And the answer, "No, but I know two medical men and a registered nurse who think I have." My submission is that the Prayer which stands in the name of the hon. Member for Dumfries does more credit to his heart than to his head. We know there are hard cases, but no matter how you make your laws there will be hard cases, and hard cases make bad law. After a campaign which lasted over 30 years, this House raised nursing to the status of a profession, and gave the name of "registered nurse" to a nurse who had certain qualifications. It is possible that there may be cases of hardship, but wherever you draw the line you will always have cases of hardship, and is it not a far greater hardship, in the case of the body of women who have put their names on the register, who now number 25,000 and who claim the proud title of registered nurse, to see the whole of their qualifications whittled away at the last moment by putting people on the register who are not fully competent? This Prayer is an amiable attempt to please everybody, but sentimental legislation must be paid for, and this is at the expense of the public and of those who have secured the status of registered nurse.

MR. FOOT: I only intervene for a few minutes to meet if I can the point raised by the hon. and gallant Member who has just spoken. . . . When the House found it necessary to bring in this Measure to register nurses, they had no right, in bringing about that necessary reform, to inflict hardship on a number of women whose qualifications were very high and who had done nothing to deserve this slur.

LIEUT.-COLONEL FREMANTLE: I think it incumbent on me to give one or two reasons why I differ from my professional colleagues who are supporting the Motion now before the House. I can do so very shortly, inasmuch as the Minister of Health has already stated the main reasons. If I had had a share in framing the Act of 1919, I should probably have taken the same view as the supporters of the Motion. None of them, nor I, had any share in drawing up and passing that Act. I quite agree that the best thing to do would have been to have introduced everybody up to the time of the passing of the Act, and to have let them go on as *bona fide* members of the profession. That would have had this extra advantage, as was the case in the Midwives Act, with which I have had a great deal to do, that you would thereby have brought a whole lot of these persons, who are outside the profession, within the ambit and discipline of the profession. Unfortunately I have been unable to agree to that position in face of the present Act, because that ground is cut away from our feet by the decision of Parliament. Wrong as I think it was, that was the decision. The position is, to my mind, very clearly laid down in the particular Rule which has been so much quoted, although only partially quoted. It is perfectly true that Parliament laid down that Rules should be made for the introduction of the *bona fide* nurse, but it says that the conditions she has to fulfil are to be such as appear to the Nursing Council to be satisfactory. The position is surely this, and I do not think it has been mentioned so far. Parliament, under the Act, provided a democratic constitution for the new profession. A Provisional Council was first of all formed and nominated in various ways. It had to arrange for a democratic election of a Representative Council. That election has recently been held, and a newly appointed democratic Representative Council is now in being. It is not to the point to say that that does not really represent the *bona fide* nurses. That is the democratic constitution, laid down by the will of Parliament. That constitution has resulted in the General Nursing Council being formed, who have got to approve the Rule and lay down the conditions. Therefore it entirely prevents the Motion now before the House being carried, because that General Nursing Council have definitely stated that they do not consider they can frame any Rule of this sort that would be satisfactory to them.

Therefore we come back to asking if it be possible to frame any Rule for *bona fide* nurses that is satisfactory to the present Nursing Council, representing mainly fully-trained nurses. Logically, I believe it would be impossible, and that the logical position is that taken up by the Member for South-West St. Pancras, but the Nursing Council have already been illogical, because they have passed a Rule saying that they will be satisfied with certain conditions for *bona fide* nurses as long as they practised before 1900. Now we come to a compromise. We have the fact that they have definitely laid it down that they can accept as satisfactory certain conditions for nurses who were

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