

HOW THE COLLEGE CAUCUS CAPTURED THE COUNCIL.

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DEPUTATION TO THE BOARD OF TRADE, 1905.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, deputed by the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, spoke in support of legal registration, and in opposition to the application of the City Financiers. She said: "There is not amongst the signatories making application for powers which, if granted, would involve questions affecting the education, examination, certification, registration, discipline, and control of trained nurses, the name of one hospital matron, trained nurse or medical practitioner." (The signatories of the College scheme are all laymen.) "We submit that no layman can determine, and should not, therefore, be granted powers to determine, questions involving technical, and highly specialised professional matters, a principle recognised in connection with all professions. . . . The Articles of Association make no provision that the nurses' representatives are to be elected by the nurses whom they are to govern. My Society regards this principle as absolutely essential both for the safety of the individual nurse and to the success of any scheme of professional government.

"In connection with the maintenance of a Register of Nurses, the new Society seeks power 'to remove from such Register the name or names of any person or persons as the Society in its discretion may think proper.' It is submitted that such powers, involving the professional ruin of a trained nurse, should not be exercised at the sole discretion of any society, but only after the person concerned has been *proved* guilty of serious misconduct, and has had an opportunity of being heard in her own defence, either personally or through her legal adviser, for which no provision is made in the Memorandum or Articles of Association. It is noteworthy that a quorum of *three*, or at an adjourned meeting of the Council, of *two*, could exercise this most arbitrary and dangerous power.

"The organisation of Nursing by State Registration has passed out of the realm of experiment; voluntary measures have been tried and failed, even under Royal patronage and high professional auspices. (And yet, ten years later, Sir Arthur Stanley and Sir E. Cooper Perry offered the Nursing Profession a system of *voluntary* Registration!)

Mrs. Fenwick pointed out that the whole question of the organisation of Nursing was *sub judice*, as the Select Committee on Registration had not issued its Report, and that the application of the new Society for incorporation was most inopportune and would cause needless confusion if legal authority were conferred on any body of unprofessional persons empowering them to deal with the important questions which were then under the consideration of Parliament.

Mrs. Fenwick further pointed out that the Central Hospital Council for London (which the Hon. Sydney Holland represented) was composed of managers of the great hospitals, and the nurses had no representation upon it. She entirely agreed as to the ulterior influence which must inevitably be exercised by the millionaire signatories if the scheme was sanctioned. It was quite preposterous to suppose that nurses could assume an independent position and stand out against it. Those interested were most generous supporters of hospitals, some had seats on the Central Hospital Council, the King's Fund, the Hospital Sunday and Saturday Funds. If these gentlemen pushed the scheme, how was it possible for the nurses to take an independent position. (This is exactly the deplorable position of the members of the College of Nursing, Ltd.) In regard to finance, the nurses were given no voice in the expenditure of the funds they subscribed. Nurses desired to defray their own expenses and to control their own expenditure. (Thousands of pounds of the nurses' money is being administered by the General Nursing Council—by a Finance Committee, of which a medical man is Chairman—and no Balance Sheet has been issued to Registered Nurses since the Council was formed in 1920.)

Dr. Bedford Fenwick, in opposing the grant of a licence by the Board of Trade, referred to the action taken by the Board in 1891, when the Royal British Nurses Association made application for the same privilege. The Association was called upon to advertise its application, notice being given that any objections must be sent in to the Board before May 16th. Yet, on May 6th, ten days before the allotted period expired, the Board of Trade refused the application, and at a subsequent meeting between representatives of the Association and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the President of the Board, defined his own position in the matter as follows:—

"The invariable custom of the Board in these matters was to direct the application for a licence to be advertised and then, if there was any serious opposition, to decline the application. In a matter like this the Board was not competent to judge between the two parties, and did not profess to judge, which was right; but if there was any influential opposition, the Board simply declined to give the licence."

Dr. Fenwick said he was quite content to leave this matter to be settled according to the "invariable custom of the Board" because the Chairman himself had informed them as to the "immense opposition" which had been expressed to the objects of the new Society.

Miss Huxley, representing the Irish Nurses' Association, pointed out that although the scheme was supposed to apply to Ireland, the Irish nurses had not in any way been consulted, nor so far as she was aware, had any notice of the application been inserted in an Irish paper. She entirely agreed with the reasons advanced for opposition by the previous speakers.

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