

HOW THE COLLEGE CAUCUS CAPTURED THE COUNCIL.

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THE RECORD OF CERTIFICATES.

Upon investigation, I found that much consultation (intrigue is more accurate) in and outside the Office was going on amongst the College group—and that if the record of Certificates in the published Register were to be made safe, a provision must be made which would prevent tricky omission—when the time came for setting up the type of the Register. I considered the question very carefully. Upon referring to the First Schedule, which stated what Particulars were to be entered on the Register, and which had been agreed to by Parliament, I found that the original form in which it had been agreed to by the Council had been altered, at the Ministry or elsewhere, and an explanation alluding to the grades of nurses, "existing nurse," "nurse with intermediate qualification," and "nurse by examination" added. The "anti-certs" claimed that these descriptive grades were "Qualifications," and that, as the word "certificate" did not appear in the Schedule, it could be omitted. The "pro-certs" contested this absurd contention, and claimed that nurses registered under Rule 9 (1) (a) who were accepted upon producing their certificates of training, should have such "qualification" appear in the Register.

At the meeting of the General Nursing Council, held on October 28th, 1921, Miss Cox-Davies gave notice of the following Resolution, which appeared on the Agenda:—

RESOLUTION.

"That nurses whose applications for registration comply with the Rules of the Council be registered simply as 'Existing' or 'Intermediate' Nurses, and that the word 'Trained' be used for all alike, and that the word 'Certificated' be reserved until such time as the future nurses are admitted to the Register as a result of State Examination."

This Resolution was seconded by Miss Dowbiggin.

These ladies, in their personal anxiety to placate non-certificated St. Thomas nurses and degrade the whole nursing profession, had committed the grave discourtesy of ignoring a former reference from the Council to the Registration Committee, of which I was Chairman, dealing with the question. After specious arguments in favour of their reprehensible policy, I proposed the following Amendment:—

"That as Section 3 (1) (a) 'for regulating the formation, maintenance, and publication of the Register' was referred by the Council to the Registration Committee—now that the Rules are signed and the Register open—the Registration Committee proceed at the earliest date possible to consider this reference and report to the Council at its next meeting."

As Chairman of the Registration Committee I took strong exception to the unconstitutional methods of Misses Cox-Davies and Dowbiggin, in placing the Resolution on the Council's Agenda before the Registration Committee had considered and reported upon it. I expressed the

opinion that it was much to be regretted that the authorities of St. Thomas' Hospital had continued to withhold certificates from their nurses for so long, but that the Council would not be dealing justly with the nurses of England and Wales if, for this reason, they failed to record under the heading of "Qualifications" the certificates upon which they had been accepted for registration. I expressed the opinion that if the Council thought that after working so hard for three years, and upwards, in order to qualify as a "Certificated Nurse," the Existing and Intermediate Nurses would submit to be deprived of the record of their certificates on the State Register—it was mistaken. I added that I would stump the country to prevent such an injustice being done.

The Chairman here thumped the table (a most unusual lack of courtesy upon the part of Mr. Priestley) and said, "Mrs. Fenwick is threatening the Council." To which I replied that I was not threatening it, I was "warning" it. My amendment was seconded by Miss Villiers.

Mr. Christian supported, and was of opinion that if the record of the Medico-Psychological Association were left out, mental nurses would have something to say about it.

The Chairman said certificates could be omitted if desired by the Council, also by an instruction of the Council anything could be put in.

In my opinion a firm lead from the Chair at this juncture might have saved much future injustice, but unfortunately it was not forthcoming.

There was further "plain speaking" upon the part of the Nurses' representatives, and ultimately Miss Cox-Davies withdrew her Resolution, and the matter was referred to the Registration Committee for consideration and report.

When dealing with tricky people I believe in "black and white," and not in "conversations," so at the next meeting of the Registration Committee Miss Isabel Macdonald proposed the following Resolution:—

"That in all cases where a nurse holds a certificate of training this shall be recorded in the qualification column of the State Register to be issued by the Council."

On a vote being taken, I, together with Miss Macdonald and Mr. Christian, voted *for* the resolution, and Miss Cox-Davies, Miss Dowbiggin, Miss Peterkin, and Dr. Goodall voted *against* it.

The Resolution was therefore lost.

Miss Dowbiggin then proposed, and Miss Cox-Davies seconded, the following Resolution:—

"That it be stated in the qualification column of the State Register whether a nurse has obtained her qualification for entry on the Register by Training, or experience, or both, as the case may be."

Dr. Goodall supported the Resolution!

Rank futility!

On being put to the meeting Miss Cox-Davies, Miss Dowbiggin and Dr. Goodall voted for it, and I, together with Miss Macdonald and Mr. Christian voted against it. I defeated the resolution by giving my casting vote, as Chairman, against it.

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