

NURSING IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

JULY 14th.

BRITISH EMPIRE EXHIBITION (NURSES).

Miss Jewson asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Overseas Trade Department whether, in view of the large number of accidents occurring at the British Empire Exhibition, he will state how many trained nurses are employed at the Red Cross station and how many V.A.D.s or other semi-trained women; what their remuneration is, respectively; and who is responsible for engaging and for paying them?

Mr. Lunn: I am informed by the British Empire Exhibition authorities that at the main ambulance station, to which any cases of more than a trivial nature are taken by motor ambulance, there are two trained nurses and a visiting matron, and from two to four V.A.D.s according to the time of day. Other partially trained women are employed at subsidiary first-aid stations. The remuneration is as follows:—

Visiting matron, three guineas a week.

Trained nurses, four guineas a week each.

The remainder of the female staff are voluntary workers whose out-of-pocket expenses only are borne by the Exhibition. The trained staff are supplied and paid by the Willesden Hospital, and the partially trained staff by the British Red Cross Society and the Society of St. John of Jerusalem for each alternate month, the three institutions recovering the amounts in question from the Exhibition authorities.

NURSES' SALARIES.

Sir J. Hood asked the Minister of Health whether he has recently received a deputation as to the minimum remuneration to be paid to nurses employed by local authorities; and whether he has come to a decision upon the matter?

Mr. Wheatley: The answer to the first part of the question is "Yes." As regards the second part, I reminded the deputation that the remuneration of these nurses is a matter for the authorities by whom they are employed, but I stated that my Department is making every effort to persuade the authorities to offer adequate salaries for these posts. I shall continue to urge this policy wherever opportunity offers.

WEST HAM UNION OFFICIALS (TRADE UNION).

Mr. Edmund Harvey asked the Minister of Health whether his attention has been called to the action of the Guardians of the West Ham Union in informing the officers in their service, including the whole-time medical staff, matron, nurses and indentured probationer nurses of the Whipps Cross Hospital, that they desire them to become members of a trade union affiliated to the Trade Union Congress, and to the decision of the Board of Guardians to review the position with reference to existing officers at the expiration of two months from the adoption by the Board of this recommendation; whether he has had any communication with the Board as to their action in this matter; and whether, in view of the special difficulties that the action of the Guardians has caused to the medical and nursing staff, he will take steps to prevent the imposition of such a regulation by the Board of Guardians?

Mr. Greenwood: My right hon. Friend is aware of the action of the Guardians, though he has not been in direct communication with them. The Guardians do not appear to be exceeding their legal powers, and my right hon. Friend does not see that the matter is one in which one could usefully take any action.

Mr. Harvey: Does the Minister consider it right that a medical staff and nurses and probationers should have their

careers injured if they do not join a trade union affiliated to the Trade Union Congress?

Mr. Lansbury: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in an adjoining borough this matter has been quite peacefully arranged between the employes and the authorities concerned, and that one of the Courts has upheld the right of the local authority to impose this condition?

Major Moulton: Would the Minister also consider whether he would not be called on to interfere if the resolution of the Guardians excluded trade unionists?

Mr. W. Thorne: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the men and women in question do not object to receiving trade union rates of pay from the Guardians?

JULY 16th.

NURSES (PENSION SCHEME).

Mr. T. Atholl Robertson asked the Minister of Health if he can see his way to establish a pension scheme for nurses on a contributory basis, with substantial aid from the State, for all nurses that have faithfully and continuously served public bodies, hospitals, and other institutions, and give assistance to the private nurse in a fair and reasonable way?

Mr. Greenwood: While my right hon. Friend is in sympathy with the object which the hon. Member has in view, he is advised that the adoption of such a scheme as is suggested would be wholly impracticable.

JULY 23rd.

NURSES' REGISTRATION.

Dr. Chapple asked the Minister of Health whether he has yet consulted the Law Officers of the Crown as to the plight of existing nurses who, notwithstanding an order of this House giving them access to the State Register of Nurses, have been denied this right by reason of the fact that the interpretation of the Act by the Nursing Council gave them only one week within which to apply for registration?

Mr. Wheatley: Yes, Sir. I am advised by the Law Officers that the view adopted by the General Nursing Council was the correct construction of the Statute.

Dr. Chapple: Does that mean that these nurses have no resource but to go to law, and, if that be so, will the Minister recompense them for any loss providing they prove themselves to be right?

Mr. Wheatley: I am afraid I do not understand the implication of the question.

Dr. Chapple: Is the right hon. Gentleman not aware that a large number of nurses are excluded from the Register because of a decision given by the Nursing Council? The Law Officers advise that the decision of the Nursing Council is correct. Does that mean that a Nurse must go to law if she thinks she is in the right and the Nursing Council in the wrong, and if she takes it to the Court, will the right hon. Gentleman indemnify the Nurse if she proves to be right?

Mr. Wheatley: I do not think there is any obligation on the Nurses to go to law.

Dr. Chapple: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Nurse has no redress unless she goes to law. If she goes to law because of this decision by the Nursing Council, will the right hon. Gentleman indemnify the Nurse if she proves to be right?

Mr. Wheatley: The question referred to Nurses who do not make application within the time. I am sure my hon. Friend must realise that if I announce that I would indemnify all Nurses against any loss incurred in litigation the Courts would be kept busy for some considerable time.

Dr. Chapple rose—

Mr. Speaker: Further questions must be put on the Paper.

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