

DEPUTATION TO THE MINISTER OF HEALTH ARRANGED BY THE REGISTERED NURSES PARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL.

At the Ministry of Health, on March 11th, the Right Hon. J. Wheatley, M.P., P.C., Minister of Health, received a Deputation, arranged by the Registered Nurses' Parliamentary Council, to lay before him a Petition to the late Prime Minister, signed by 107 Members of Parliament, presented by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald to Mr. Stanley Baldwin, and also for the purpose of urging the Minister to sign the Prescribed Syllabus of Training in Nursing Education framed and twice approved by the first General Nursing Council for England and Wales, and to support the modifications proposed by Major R. W. Barnett, M.P., to the Scheme made under paragraph 4 of the Schedule to the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919, for the election of sixteen persons to be members of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales.

The Deputation, which was introduced by Major R. W. Barnett, M.P., was constituted as follows:—

Members of Deputation.

DR. BEDFORD FENWICK.—

MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, Hon. Secretary of the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses. Nominated, 1920, as a Member of the First General Nursing Council for England and Wales by the Minister of Health.

COUNCILLOR BEATRICE KENT, President, Registered Nurses' Parliamentary Council.

MISS ISABEL MACDONALD, Secretary, Royal British Nurses' Association. Nominated, 1920, as a Member of the First General Nursing Council for England and Wales by the Minister of Health.

MISS MAUDE MACCALLUM, Hon. Secretary, Professional Union of Trained Nurses (Registered under the Trades' Union Act). Nominated, 1920, as a Member of the First General Nursing Council for England and Wales by the Minister of Health.

MISS ALICE CARTELL, Member, Executive Committee, Royal British Nurses' Association. Nominated, 1920, as Member of the First General Nursing Council for England and Wales by the Minister of Health.

MISS KATHLEEN A. SMITH, R.R.C., President, Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland.

MISS A. STEWART BRYSON, President, Fever Nurses' Association.

MISS S. M. MARSTERS, Superintendent, Paddington and St. Marylebone District Nursing Association (affiliated to the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses).

MISS GLADYS LE GEYT, Member, Central Midwives' Board. Superintendent of the Maternity and Child Welfare Centre, and Superintendent Health-Visitor under the Metropolitan Borough of Bethnal Green.

MISS MARY WINMILL, Matron, Queen Mary's Hospital for Children, Carshalton.

MISS JULIA HURLSTON, Secretary, Registered Nurses' Society (Co-operation of Private Nurses).

MISS MAUD WIESE, Chief Nurse, Claybury Mental Hospital. Member of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales. Member of the National Asylum Workers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

MISS MARGARET BREAY, Hon. Secretary, Registered Nurses' Parliamentary Council.

Major Barnett, M.P. Introduces Deputation.

Major Barnett said, in introducing the Deputation, that he did so with the more pleasure because in his work in the House of Commons on behalf of the nurses during the past five or six years, he had received much sympathy and assistance from the Labour Party.

The movement for the State Registration of Nurses had been initiated more than thirty years ago by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, both as a protection for the sick, and to improve the status of trained nurses. For many years it was

strongly opposed by hospital authorities. When the eventual success of the movement seemed certain, other methods were adopted—the College of Nursing, Ltd., was founded and established a rival Register.

In 1919, when Dr. Addison was Minister of Health, the Nurses' Registration Bill was broken up into three national Measures and carried in that form. Unfortunately those who had been opposing it managed in this country to capture the Council, and some of the Rules they put forward were of the most undemocratic kind. For example, it was provided that the Nurses on the General Part of the Register were entitled to elect eleven direct representatives on the General Nursing Council, but that six of them *must* be Matrons!

The Rules when laid before Parliament, were sent back to the General Nursing Council by the then Minister of Health (the Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P.) with a request that they should consider his (Major Barnett's) proposed amendments, and draw up, and submit to the Minister within the next twelve months such alterations as they might be prepared to make. This period elapsed on March 14th.

It appeared that the Council were going to send back the same proposals in relation to the election of the direct representatives, on the ground that representation on the Council should be secured to the teaching part of the Nursing Profession. Major Barnett pointed out that, as the Registered Nurses entitled to vote all passed through the Nursing Schools, the Matrons were the best known members of the Nursing Profession, and thus had the best chance of getting elected.

To say that six of the eleven *must* be Matrons was like saying that on a Committee of the House of Commons elected to represent the private members six out of eleven must be Right Honourables.

There were so many things wrong that the ladies present were going to urge an enquiry into the whole Nursing question.

Major Barnett then introduced the Deputation to the Minister, beginning with Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, "to whom we owe the State Registration of Nurses, which has given to a noble vocation the dignity and status of a profession."

Speech by Dr. Bedford Fenwick.

Dr. Bedford Fenwick said that as he had taken a somewhat prominent part in the movement for Nursing Reform during the last 37 years, he had been deputed to place before the Minister a summary of the views of the Deputation.

Dr. Fenwick referred to the Petition to the late Prime Minister, dated last June, which he presumed the Minister of Health had before him, signed by 107 Members of Parliament, of whom 73 were Labour Members, 27 Unionist Members, and 7 Liberal Members. Beyond these, 10 Unionists who were members of the Government and could not therefore sign the Petition, three Labour Members and one Liberal promised their cordial support to the appeal. In other words, one-fifth of the last House of Commons asked for the appointment of a Select Committee of that House to enquire into the matters set forth in the appeal, which was presented by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, on behalf of the Labour Party, to the late Prime Minister.

Dr. Fenwick submitted that the reason for this request, and the only grounds on which the Deputation ventured to ask the Minister's attention, and they hoped his favourable judgment, was that the matter was one of the greatest importance to the present and future welfare of the Nursing Profession, and was therefore of grave interest to the Medical Profession, and to every member of the general public.

They contended that the issues to be inquired into were:—

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