

1923, was conducted under the Scheme approved and signed by the Minister of Health, it had not, at that time, been laid before Parliament for the requisite 21 days, and this was subsequently done in February, 1923.

This gave Major Barnett the opportunity to move in the House of Commons that an Humble Address be presented to His Majesty which would have had the effect of amending the Scheme in the sense which we desire, which he did on March 14th of last year.

At the request of the Minister of Health (the Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P.), who had only just assumed office, Major Barnett withdrew his motion, on the Minister undertaking to refer his Amendments to the General Nursing Council, and to ask them to submit to him such alterations as they might be prepared to make within the next twelve months. That period will elapse on Friday next, and we beg very earnestly to support Major Barnett's Amendment that the election of the Direct Representatives of the Nurses on the General Part of the Register shall be thrown open, all duly nominated Registered Nurses being eligible.

It is urged by those who favour the present restrictive method that the General Nursing Council is concerned with the education of nurses, and, therefore, seats must be secured to Matrons of Training Schools.

It is true that one important part of the work of the Council is concerned with Nursing Education, but it is equally true that it is a disciplinary body with Penal Powers, and it is most undesirable that it should be compulsorily overweighted with hospital matrons, who, if in active practice, are, as the salaried officials of the employers of nurses—the Committees of Management of Voluntary Hospitals, and Boards of Guardians—not free agents.

There can be no reasonable doubt that a sufficient number of Matrons would be elected on to any General Nursing Council to represent expert professional opinion as to Nursing Education, and, if they are elected by the free choice of the nurses, will presumably possess their confidence, and sympathise with their professional and economic standards, which the present Council has signally failed to do.

Matrons come on to the Register on their qualifications as nurses, and should stand for election as such.

I would point out that no privileges whatever are reserved to Matrons, or other classes of Nurses, by the General Nursing Council for Scotland. The scheme of election is entirely free.

In conclusion I desire to draw attention to the distinct cleavage of opinion on the subject of a free Election of Direct Representatives in the General Nursing Council for England and Wales itself. When a Report on Major Barnett's Amendments was brought up by the Registration Committee at the last meeting of the Council, recommending a restricted election, a motion that it should be referred back was only lost by a very narrow majority, after the Chairman had pointed out that, if the motion were passed, an answer could not be sent to the Minister of Health, as requested, within twelve months from March 14th, 1923, and, when a direct vote was taken on a free as opposed to a restricted election, a substantial minority of the Council were in favour of making the Election of the eleven Representatives of the Registered Nurses entirely open.

We therefore urge that the Government will support Major Barnett's proposal for a free and democratic election of the eleven Direct Representatives of the nurses on the General Part of the Register.

We desire to support Major Barnett's Motion for an extension of time from seven to twenty-one days, during which time the nurses may record their votes, as the quashing of the Election in 1923, owing to the grave mismanage-

ment, for which the Nurses had to pay, proved that seven days was a quite inadequate time for the purpose.

We also desire to petition for the deletion of Clause 8 (2), which gives the Returning Officer (the Chairman of the Council) absolute powers, and completely exonerates him from responsibility for any irregularity, or illegality, which may be perpetrated in the course of the Election. This Clause, drafted by medical autocrats, deprives Registered Nurses of any legal protection whatever. No such provision is incorporated in the Schedule for the Election of the Direct Representatives on the General Medical Council. Naturally the medical profession will not submit to any such provision.

Mrs. Fenwick said that the Nurses' Organisations claimed a compulsory Syllabus of Training as a right, and considered it their duty to petition the Minister of Health to sign it, and that the Schedule of Election should be democratic, and so framed that independent professional nurses could freely record their vote.

#### Speech by Miss Isabel Macdonald, S.R.N.

Miss Isabel Macdonald, S.R.N., said she desired to support the Petition for the appointment of a Select Committee of the House of Commons to enquire into the administration of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, the College of Nursing, Ltd., and the Nation's Fund for Nurses. She submitted that the College having failed to secure from Parliament the right to administer the Nurses' Registration Act now sought to obtain control of the General Nursing Council, through the influence of the Matrons, and control of large funds obtained by means of their appeal known as the Nation's Fund for Nurses.

She did not object to the College of Nursing as such, she would welcome one which would promote the higher education of nurses, but she pointed out that the College as an educational body did not exist; it was a body which claimed to represent the nurses on the lines of an Association or Trade Union in the body politic, but it was "a Trade Union" organised and controlled by the nurses' employers, and financed, not by the members who form it and on whose authority it claims to speak, but by public charity. She hoped the Minister would take steps to free the profession from the control of the College, which had gained domination by being able to use for purposes of organisation large sums obtained by charity and by the influence of the Matrons pushed to the point of coercion to make the nurses join the College.

#### Speech by Miss Maude MacCallum, S.R.N.

Miss Maude MacCallum, S.R.N., informed the Minister of Health that the Professional Union of Trained Nurses was the only Nurses' Trade Union in England, Scotland and Wales.

She supported the statements made to show the tyrannical manner in which the nurses were treated by employers and their agents—the College Matrons. She instanced the case of the three nurses belonging to the Nurses' Co-operation, 22, Langham Street, W. 1, who were turned out of that Association at almost a moment's notice, not because there was anything against them professionally or morally, but because they were working for just conditions for the members of the staff, and had the courage to start the Nurses' Trade Union.

In connection with the College of Nursing, Ltd., she asserted that no one nowadays could obtain a post of any importance unless she belonged to this "octopus" Society, no matter how much she disliked it; she had no choice.

Miss MacCallum gave an instance of a Matron of a London Hospital, who, desiring to injure the Trade Union, informed her nurses that she would only sanction their attending a meeting which was being advertised by the Union on condition that they shouted the speakers down and broke

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