

## GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND AND WALES.

On our day of publication this month, the General Nursing Council is holding its monthly meeting, a report of which will appear in our next issue, on February 1st.

The skeleton Agenda tells us nothing, with the exception of the notice of the Annual Election of the Chairmen of the Council and Standing Committees.

We have previously expressed our opinion, and claimed the right of Registered Nurses to fill these official positions, and until such time as Registered Nurses preside over their own Committees, there is no hope of Nursing ranking as a Profession. That the lay and medical autocracy, initiated by the votes of the College group (led by Miss Cox-Davies and Miss Lloyd Still) cannot fail in the future, as it has in the past, to depreciate the status of Registered Nurses in public estimation.

The present position of Registered Nurses on their own Governing Body is not only degrading but ludicrous. Why are professional nurses the only body of women to be treated like congenital idiots? We have an Act for the Equality of the Sexes, we have eight women Members of Parliament, we have a woman President of the Trades Union Council, and it is not at all improbable when our next issue appears, that we shall have women holding Ministerial positions in a new Government.

We fear, however, that in the forthcoming elections the majority group of nurses on the Council will continue to abase themselves, and us, by voting to continue under the tyrannical dictation of a medical directorate. We shall have grave cause of complaint if our privileges are again betrayed in this particular.

### The Finance Committee.

At present our finances, every penny contributed by the nurses, are controlled by a medical chairman. So far (and the Council has been in existence for nearly four years) no Balance Sheet has been available. We gather the expenditure has been phenomenal, a huge staff of some 43 persons being employed to register some 2,000 persons a month! When the audited Balance Sheet sees the light of day, it will be an eye-opener. We are informed that upwards of £25,000 has already evaporated.

### The Registration Committee.

Our Registration Committee is also dominated by a medical man, so that Registered Nurses are deprived of a professional signature on their State Certificate granting them the title of "Registered Nurse." Thus controlled, the Registration Committee did nothing to protect the 30,000 trained nurses registered under the 1921 Statutory Rules, to oppose the degradation of the General Part of the Register by the admission of untrained women, thus breaking its contract with the nurses who had paid for the privilege of placing their names on a Register of trained and certificated nurses, and undermining the economic stability of the nursing profession for years to come.

Under medical control, and official bureaucracy, the 1922 Register was issued ten months late, and thousands of applicants are kept waiting for at least six months for the privilege of registration.

Also a Matron known to be liable to imprisonment—if prosecuted by the Midwives' Board—was, through social influence, thrust upon the General Part of the Register, establishing a most dangerous precedent.

What is the position of the Penal and Disciplinary Committee in relation to nurses who commit the same misdemeanour in relation to the Nurses' Register? How can it punish any woman for a similar misdemeanour, by removing her name from the Register, so long as that of

the privileged person remains on it? Thus, are our penal clauses to remain a dead letter? We imagine so.

### The Mental Nurses' Committee.

The Mental Nurses' Committee is also under medical control, with the result that once again the Council has, without the least right or excuse for so doing, delegated its Statutory rights and privileges to an Association of medical specialists—the Medico-Psychological Association—and granted them powers for which Parliament holds the General Nursing Council, on which there is a majority of nurses, responsible.

In our issue of November 24th ult., we published a letter from the Minister of Health showing deplorable ignorance of the provisions of the Nurses' Act in so far as its Statutory provisions are concerned. In this amazing document the Minister states that he has been in consultation with the Board of Control (Ministry of Health)—which deals with Lunacy and Mental Deficiency—largely composed of lay persons and on which there is not one Registered Nurse, on the question of Mental Nurses Examinations, and that "the Board point out, however, that the proposed examination is similar to that already conducted by the Medico-Psychological Association. The Minister shares the view of the Board that it is undesirable that there should be two bodies holding examinations for mental nurses, and he would welcome any steps to avoid such duplication. The effect of these duplicate examinations is to perpetuate two classes of mental nurses, registered and unregistered, since, if mental nurses were for any reason reluctant to register, it would obviously be extremely difficult to question the qualifications of an unregistered nurse, who, in fact, held the Certificate of the Association. The Minister looks forward to the time when all institutional nurses will be registered, but in the case of mental nurses so long as the duplicate examinations continue there is a danger that nurses may prefer to seek the Certificate, the value of which has long been recognised, and to take the examination, the fee for which is understood to be less than the fees contemplated by the Council." The Minister therefore placing the Statutory General Nursing Council—empowered by Parliament to define and control the Examination of Mental Nurses, and which has two Registered Mental Nurses upon it—and the Association of Medical Mental Specialists on a par as to authority, proceeds to refuse to sign the Syllabus of Examination drafted by the General Nursing Council, until "some means can be found of avoiding the threatened duplication of examinations covering practically identical ground."

Of course, our invertebrate Council meekly bowed to the erroneous conclusions of the ignorant Board of Control, held a conference with the Medico-Psychological Association, and as usual gave us away. It has actually agreed to stultify the provisions of Parliament by appointing an Advisory Committee (without defining its functions) of the M.P.A., which is to have the power of "nominating" all the Examiners for the Council's examinations for Mental Nurses! Parliament provided that elected Registered Mental Nurses should have a voice in the management of their own professional affairs, and, of course the Chairman and Council proceed to deprive them of such power, and whilst calling upon Mental Nurses to provide every penny for Examination and Registration Fees, an *outside* medical body is to allocate the expenditure of such fees. Was ever a greater scandal? We doubt it.

This job is the direct result of medical supremacy on the Nurses' Governing Body!

Just as the London Obstetrical Society ceased to examine midwives when the examination of the Central Midwives' Board was instituted, so the M.P.A., which has done excellent work in the past, in standardising the examinations of Mental Nurses, should discontinue its examination upon

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