

## CONFERENCE ON THE NURSING SERVICE IN MENTAL HOSPITALS.

A Conference of hospital authorities convened by Sir Frederick Willis, the Chairman of the Board of Control, to consider the Nursing Service in mental hospitals, with special reference to the report made by the Departmental Committee on Nursing, recently issued, was held at the offices of the Civil Service Commission, in Burlington Gardens, on April 21st and 22nd, Sir Frederick Willis presiding.

Invitations were sent to every Visiting Committee, and, in addition to the General Nursing Council for England and Wales (delegates Miss E. M. Musson, R.R.C. and Mr. R. W. Donaldson), the Royal British Nurses' Association (delegates Miss M. Lamb, S.R.N., R.M.N., Matron Claybury Mental Hospital, and Miss M. Breay, S.R.N.), the College of Nursing, Ltd. (Miss Cowlin and Miss M. Rundle), the Mental Hospital Matrons' Association (delegate Miss Macaulay, S.R.N., R.M.N., Matron Kent County Mental Hospital, Maidstone, President Mental Hospital Matrons' Association), the National Asylum Workers Union (delegate Mr. Gibson), &c.

The Conference was opened by the Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P., Minister of Health, who said that the report of the Departmental Committee had now been issued, and it would be the duty of the conference to consider the conclusions at which the Committee had arrived. He hoped those present would feel, as he did, that it was necessary that the nursing service for the insane should at least be equal in efficiency and in status to any other branch of the nursing service. He said also we had got to-day a wonderful series of mental hospitals, but we should not, however, get the full benefit of those institutions and their equipment, and training unless it was realised at the same time that the nursing profession was of equal importance with skill and medical treatment for the cure of the patient, and that it should rightly be recognised for what it was—a noble and unselfish calling which required the highest qualities both of head and hand.

Questions considered were Grading of Staff (Dr. H. D. Macphail, O.B.E.); Training, Dr. F. W. Menzies, F.R.C.P.; Remuneration, Dr. M. A. Collins, O.B.E.; Hours of Duty, Dr. G. Clarke and Dr. R. Eager, O.B.E.; Supply of Suitable Candidates and Conditions of Service apart from pay and hours, Dr. Devine, O.B.E., F.R.C.P., and the Nursing of Male Patients by Women Nurses, by Miss Perry, Matron of Cardiff City Mental Hospital, the only Matron who was a selected speaker on the morning of April 21st, the other speakers being Medical Superintendents.

Dr. Macphail considered it essential that all Matrons of Mental Hospitals should be doubly trained, and endorsed the finding of the Report that they should have control of all women nurses.

Dr. Menzies said he had come down from Cheddleton to listen to various points of view. In regard to teaching nurses some 40 years ago he tried demonstrations in the Post Mortem room: the nurses said it was nauseating, the Matron said it was indecent, and the Medical Officer said it was undesirable.

On the question of whether contracts should be binding or not, it was suggested that a nurse usually wanted a change only because her young man had jilted her. If things could be tidied over until she got another, she would settle down.

Opinion was by no means unanimous as to whether lectures should be attended in on or off-duty time. For instance, the Town Clerk of Middlesborough considered it "wholly wrong for nurses to be trained in the time of the Committee, they might have to have fever training and maternity training, and goodness knew where it was going to stop."

Miss Musson, speaking on the question of reciprocity,

advocated a nurse having a complete mental, and a complete general training.

Miss Macaulay advocated clinical instruction for nurses in the wards by the medical staff. They should be questioned in the wards.

It was evident at the Morning Session on April 21st that the Medico-Psychological Association had no intention of discontinuing its examination for nurses, and in the course of the discussion in the afternoon, Miss M. Breay, S.R.N., begged the Medical Superintendents, and representatives of local authorities, who had so much influence with nurses in training, to urge upon those under their control the extreme importance of obtaining admission to the Supplementary Part of the Register for Mental Nurses under the Nurses' Registration Act. It was the qualification of the future, and it was unfair to nurses in training not to impress this upon them. She referred to the voluntary work of the London Obstetrical Society in examining nurses, which ceased its examination when that of the Central Midwives' Board was instituted, and said that the Royal British Nurses' Association, which she had the honour to represent (and which on the initiative of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick was the first body to work for Registration of Nurses, in this or any other country), discontinued the publication of its Register when the Nurses' Registration Acts were placed on the Statute Book.

Without doubt, the evidence of efficiency to be demanded of nurses in the future was registration by the State, and she asked those present, if they did not desire to see those women now entering upon their nursing career at a cruel disadvantage in middle life, to urge them to Register under one of the General Nursing Councils established under State Authority.

Later Mr. Donaldson, Delegate of the General Nursing Council, advanced a similar plea.

On the second day the necessity for the provision of further mental hospital accommodation was under consideration.

## NURSES' ORGANISATIONS.

### THE MATRONS' COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

The Summer Meeting of the Matrons' Council will be held by the kind invitation of the Matron, Miss Kathleen Smith, R.R.C., and of the Committee of Management, at the West End Hospital for Nervous Diseases, Gloucester Gate, Regent's Park, N.W. 1, on Saturday, June 6th, from 3 to 6 p.m.

### REGISTERED NURSES' PARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL.

A well-attended Meeting of the Registered Nurses' Parliamentary Council was held at 431, Oxford Street, on Saturday, April 25th, with Councillor Beatrice Kent (President) in the Chair. Several important matters were carefully discussed and action taken, and a reply was read from Mr. Gerald Hurst, K.C., M.P., in answer to a letter sent to him by the President, in relation to the Bill for the Registration and Inspection of Nursing Homes, introduced by him into the House of Commons on behalf of the College of Nursing, Ltd.

### THE IRISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

We are glad to note that success has attended the efforts of those who desired to re-organise the Irish Nurses' Association, and that at the Meeting held, by permission, in the Royal College of Physicians, Dublin, at which Miss A. Reeve, R.G.N., Matron of Dr. Stevens' Hospital, presided, Miss Annie Butler, Assistant Matron at St. Vincent's Hospital, was elected President, Miss Mary K. McGinley, Tutor-Sister at Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, Vice-President, and a representative Committee formed.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)