

evaded this obligation in that it has not prescribed any scheme of training, but has merely said in effect "the candidate shall be trained in the subjects required by the examination for a defined minimum period of time."

10. Your Committee have given their closest attention to the proper construction to be placed upon the words "prescribed training." They are prepared to agree with the definition suggested to them of the word "prescribed." It, therefore, remained to them to consider what could properly be said to represent a "training." After due consideration they are satisfied that the word "training" does not necessarily involve a scheme of training more detailed than that which is prescribed under Rules (1), (4), (6) and (7), and the Syllabus of Examination together with the Nurses' Chart scheduled to these Rules.

11. Your Committee are of opinion, therefore, that there is in effect a "prescribed training" and that the rules proposed by the General Nursing Council in regard to the prescribed training for nurses do, in fact, comply with the provisions of the Act.

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12. In addition to the Rules and the Syllabus of Examination scheduled to them, the General Nursing Council have issued a syllabus of Lectures and Demonstrations for Education and Training. This Syllabus has been issued by the Council on their own authority and, therefore, there is no compulsion upon training schools to follow the scheme proposed by it. The Council state in the preface to the syllabus that they have compiled it "in the hope that it may aid the training schools in arriving at a general standard of nursing education, and that it may provide a scheme by which the candidates may be instructed in the subjects prescribed in detail by the Syllabus of Subjects for Examination."

13. In considering the general policy to be adopted in regard to the present syllabus of training, three questions arise:—

(i) Is the present syllabus adequate for the training which it is devised to effect?

(ii) Should it be made compulsory?

(iii) Should some shorter syllabus be issued which can be made compulsory?

14. Your Committee have heard several complaints against the present scheme. It has been alleged that it does not agree in detail with the compulsory examination syllabus, that it is complicated and difficult to understand, that it sets a far higher standard than could reasonably be expected from students having to work under the conditions normal to nurse probationers. On the other hand, it has been pointed out with some force that the present scheme has real educational value. It is admittedly ambitious, but it has the advantage of putting before training schools an ideal at which they can aim.

15. Although several witnesses agreed that a simpler scheme, if made compulsory, might assist the smaller hospitals in the training of their probationers, it seems clear to Your Committee that were the present scheme made compulsory, the difficulties of these hospitals in supplying an adequate training in competition with the larger and better equipped hospitals would be increased, and consequently their supply of nurses, already short, might tend to become still further reduced. Lastly, it is of considerable importance to remember that any scheme that is made compulsory could only undergo amendment by somewhat lengthy and cumbrous methods, for not only have such amendments to be submitted to the Minister for his approval, but they have also on each occasion to be laid upon the Table of the House for its sanction.

16. For these reasons, Your Committee do not recommend that the Syllabus of Training should be made compulsory

in its present form, but they are impressed with the value of such a scheme as a guide to training and do not, therefore, recommend that it should be withdrawn.

17. Your Committee have paid special attention to the question of the issue, in addition to the present syllabus, of a more elementary syllabus, setting out a minimum course of training, which could be made compulsory. This course is open to several objections. A detailed compulsory examination syllabus including a Nurses' Chart already exists. It has been pointed out to Your Committee that this compulsory syllabus is in effect a skeleton of the present training syllabus. If such an elementary syllabus were to differ from the existing examination syllabus, the position of tutors would only be further embarrassed, while if it were to coincide with the existing syllabus, it would be superfluous. Further, in such matters a minimum usually tends to become a maximum, and the high standard set to nurse-training by the present syllabus, once lowered, would be very difficult to work up to again. Your Committee cannot feel that a lowered standard could result in any benefit to the nursing profession as a whole, and, therefore, they do not recommend the issue of a compulsory minimum course of training.

18. Your Committee have heard some evidence as to the working of the scheme in the smaller hospitals which are approved by the Council as associated or affiliated training schools. They are impressed by the difficulties experienced by these institutions, particularly in regard to the recruitment of the necessary personnel. Your Committee heard complaints from several witnesses of the difficulty of recruitment generally, not only in regard to the quantity but also the quality of the applicants. The main reason that was alleged for this was the increased attractiveness of other vocations. Your Committee were informed that the smaller hospitals tend to feel this pressure more than the larger institutions for several reasons. Probationers entering hospitals not approved as complete training schools have to spend four years instead of three in training. Probationers have to change their hospitals during the course of their training, which they are often reluctant to do. The wider experience available at the larger institutions attracts more recruits. There is reason to believe also that the difficulties of the smaller hospitals have to some degree been augmented by the lowering of the age at which the larger hospitals are prepared to take in probationers. The smaller hospitals are, however, satisfied that they can do the necessary teaching and that they can succeed in getting their probationers through the examination. Your Committee do not consider, therefore, that the issue of a compulsory course of training would in practice do much to alleviate the real difficulties of the smaller hospital.

19. As regards the compulsory syllabus of examination, the general view of the witnesses Your Committee have heard seems to be that it is satisfactory. Only two complaints have been put to them. It has been alleged, first, that discrepancies exist between the examination and training syllabus, and secondly, that the percentage of candidates failing to pass is too high.

20. On the first point, Your Committee are not satisfied that the alleged discrepancies attained any serious proportions. Moreover it is important to remember that the scheme Your Committee are considering is still in its infancy, only five preliminary examinations and one final examination have as yet been held. Your Committee are well aware that the training of nurses has been carried on in this country for many years past, but at the initiation of a new scheme including a compulsory examination, it is clear that both the examiners and the tutors entrusted with the training of candidates require time to gain the requisite experience. After all, the criticism that questions have been put to candidates which are outside the scope of the syllabus is one that is levelled against most examinations.

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