

being allotted to Registered Nurses (Matrons of Hospitals other than those which are approved Training Schools or otherwise) one of whom must be or have been directly employed in the Public Health Service, or engaged in district nursing, one who is or has been engaged in private practice, and one who is employed as a Sister Tutor at a Training School approved by the Council.

Thus nine of the eleven seats are reserved for the representatives of a clientèle of a few thousand nurses leaving to the unrestricted vote of the whole electorate of some 40,000 nurses only *two* representatives. The nurses registered on the General Part of the Register are thus deprived of that free choice in the selection of their Representatives, which is secured to the nurses registered in the Supplementary Parts of the Register.

The election of the Direct Representatives on the General Nursing Councils for Scotland and for Northern Ireland is unrestricted. I submit that the election of Registered Nurses on the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, should be in accordance with the same principle, and that no privileged positions be reserved for classes of nurses—professional equality having been attained by registration. The present and proposed schemes of election for the nurses on the General Part of the Register are undemocratic and undesirable, and the method of filling in the Voting Papers at the Election in January, 1923, in seven different sections, proved restrictive, complicated, vexatious, and productive of official pressure.

It is urged by those who favour the present restrictive plan of election that the General Nursing Council is primarily concerned with Nursing Education, and therefore seats must be secured to Matrons of Training Schools for Nurses.

It is true that one important part of the work of the Council is educational, but it is important to realise that it is also a Disciplinary Body with Penal Powers, and it is most undesirable that it should be one weighted with privileged persons. Under the Scheme advanced by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, the majority of the Matrons are claiming the right as heads of Nurse Training Schools to exercise disciplinary powers over colleagues—the whole body of registered nurses, for whom they are in no way responsible. As a class, the Matrons of Hospitals are devoted to their responsible duties and are highly respected by the rank and file of the Nursing Profession, and there can be no 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 ethical standards, which in several instances the majority on the present Council have signally failed to do.

Matrons come on to the Register on their qualifications as nurses, and should stand for election as such. I would emphasise the point that no privileges whatever are reserved to Matrons, or other classes of Nurses by the General Nursing Council for Scotland, or by the Joint Nursing and Midwives Council for Northern Ireland—the schemes of election are entirely free.

It is noteworthy that the opinion on the General Nursing Council for England and Wales is very divided upon the Election Scheme.

The present Minister of Health when in office in March, 1923, referred to the General Nursing Council Amendments proposed by Sir Richard Barnett, under paragraph 4 of the Schedule to the Nurses Registration Act, 1919, with the request that they would draw up and submit to him within twelve months such alterations to their Scheme of Election, as they might be prepared to make.

The Council did not comply with this request within the prescribed time, and when at last it considered the Election Scheme at its Meeting on July 25th, 1924, no less than four different Notices of Motion in reference to it were placed on the Agenda, including one "that the whole of the eleven seats reserved for Registered Nurses be open to all Registered Nurses" and two more were moved as Amendments in the room. This diversity of opinion in the Council itself, after fifteen months' special consideration of the question, is evidence of the limited support to allotting seats to privileged sections of nurses. I submit that the eleven seats reserved on the Council to represent nurses on the General Part of the Register, should be open to any nurse so registered duly nominated in compliance with the Rules; otherwise it is evident that those whose services might be of great value to the Council may be excluded, and further, that as the principle of free election is working satisfactorily in Scotland, the English Council has a precedent for adopting it.

The acute shortage of suitable applicants for training in many hospitals proves indifference upon the part of young womanhood to this humanitarian work. Everything, therefore, should be done to encourage a keen sense of professional responsibility upon the part of the Registered Nurses, in whose ultimate power the government of the Nursing Profession should be centred.

PROFESSIONAL PROTECTION.

The one disadvantage of professional privileges is that history teaches us they must be protected, and we find that the medical and other professions wisely contribute to a central fund for the purpose. We foresee Registered Nurses will soon have to do likewise. For the moment the vigilance of the few has just—through the recommendation of the Select Committee on the General Nursing Council—secured for Registered Nurses the indispensable power to govern their own profession, through a liberal Constitution of the Council—a power we sincerely hope they will value and make use of in the future.

The question of the moment is that such privileges cannot be won without expenditure, and as Chief Witness in support of the nurses' rights before the Select Committee, by whose decisions the Registered Nurses as a whole have equal rights as such—so far as the nomination and election of candidates to serve on the Governing Body are concerned—I appeal to Registered Nurses as a whole to contribute towards the cost of attaining this successful result. All will benefit, therefore all should pay according to their means. We need £20 to cover the preliminary expenses and to give publicity to the great advantage secured. There are now some 40,000 Nurses on the Register, so a small donation from those who appreciate their professional vote should wipe out that little debt without any inconvenience. Please send such offerings to Miss Breay, Registered Nurses Parliamentary Council, 431, Oxford Street, London, W.1.

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