

Mr. Rhys Davies: Very well.

Chairman: Thank you very much for your interesting evidence, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick.

Witness: I hope you will take note of the first paragraph of my précis, that we desire specially to thank the Minister for consenting to recommend this Select Committee. Whatever may be the result, we are very grateful for the publicity.

The witness withdrew.

EXPLANATORY NOTE IN AMPLIFICATION OF REPLIES TO QUESTIONS ADDRESSED TO MRS. FENWICK BY MR. G. B. HURST, K.C., M.P., JULY 23rd, 1925.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick recalled and examined (July 28th).

Witness:

All I ask permission to do is to amplify a reply to a question put, I think by Mr. Hurst. I ask this in fairness to myself. May I read my reply?

Chairman:

Yes.

Witness:

In fairness to myself I shall consider it a privilege if I may place the following facts before the Committee. In February, 1922, the Registration Committee, of which I was Chair, recommended a draft prescribed Scheme for the Election of 16 persons as direct representatives of the registered nurses on the General Nursing Council, 11 to be elected by the Nurses on the General Part of the Register, they recommended that 6 seats should be secured to Matrons of Training Schools, 5 seats secured to Nurses who had *not* been Matrons, and 5 seats for Nurses on the Special Parts of the Register.

In April, 1922, Dr. Goodall was elected Chair of the Registration Committee. The Election Scheme was amended, and of the 5 seats secured to Nurses on the General Part of the Register, one was reserved for a district nurse, and one for a Private Nurse.

On October, 27th, 1922, a letter from the Ministry of Health to the Council informed it that it was not competent to reserve five places for persons who had not been Matrons. It was *ultra vires*.

As a member of the Council present, I stated that "I should have liked to move a drastic amendment that the Scheme for election should be on the same democratic basis as that in Scotland, that the 11 representatives of general nurses should be elected by the registered nurses on the General Part of the Register"—but to prevent classification of nurses, I moved that:—"The five Registered Nurses be elected by the Registered Nurses on the General Part of the Register," which was seconded.

The Chairman, Sir Wilmot Herringham, refused to accept the amendment although it was permissible on the Minister's letter, who himself recommended amendments to the Draft Scheme.

Thus the Scheme agreed made it possible that every place, excepting two allotted to male nurses, might be filled by a Matron.

The majority of the Nurses' Organisations were strongly opposed to the principle of the reservation of seats on the Council for privileged classes of Matrons and Nurses. They claimed a free choice of candidates. Nothing remained, therefore, but to oppose the Schedule when signed by the Minister and laid on the table of the House for the consideration of Parliament.

We approached Sir Richard Barnett through the Registered Nurses Parliamentary Council, who was good enough to consent to give notice that he would move in the House of Commons "a humble Address to His Majesty praying that certain modifications may be made in the Scheme, amongst them to substitute for the present complicated

qualifications for election the words:—"Eleven Registered Nurses (*i.e.*, Nurses registered on the General Part of the Register)."

The Motion came before the House on March 14th, 1923. The Minister, the Right Honble. Neville Chamberlain, undertook that if the Motion was withdrawn he would request the General Nursing Council to consider the amendments, and ask them to draw up and submit to him such alterations as they may be prepared to make within the next 12 months.

The Motion was withdrawn, and after 15 months the only amendments proposed by the Council, constituted the Scheme of Election more restrictive than ever, leaving only 2 seats out of 11 unclassified, for election by 40,000 general nurses, all of which might be occupied by Matrons.

In March, 1924, we appealed to the then Minister of Health, the Right Honble. J. Wheatley, to appoint a Select Committee to consider our serious grievances.

This he consented to do, selecting two specified points for reference—a pledge which has been redeemed by his successor in Office, the Right Honble. Neville Chamberlain,

I have asked your permission to make this statement because I should not have liked the nurses to think that, although I was on the Committee which recommended the seats for Matrons, we had not tried to provide a balance of power by recommending seats be secured for the nurses; and also, when it was found that nurses were not to have this privilege we did not take further steps to try to make their Council representative.

The witness withdrew.

AN UNWORTHY ATTEMPT.

It is reported on good authority that an attempt was made to influence the Committee of the House of Commons, which is composed of the thirteen medical members, to express an opinion adverse to both counts to be considered by the Select Committee. It is satisfactory that they did not take such action. Members of the Profession of Nursing have a right to petition Parliament—if in their opinion their Act is being maladministered, and for the Medical Committee of the House, as such, to interfere to prevent such freedom of action would be highly improper. We hope in the future the medical members of the House of Commons will encourage Registered Nurses to seek their sympathy and help in furthering nursing efficiency. During the present Parliament the medical members have not so far taken a leading part in furthering nursing aspirations—and one or two of their number are known to be somewhat intolerant of the recognition of the nurses' rights under their Registration Act.

REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL.

In our last issue we notified that the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the General Nursing Council for England and Wales had been issued, and indicated the great powers which had been won for Registered nurses as the result of the Committee's recommendation as to the open election of their Direct Representatives on the General Part of the Register on the Council.

Since then the Report has been published as a Blue Book, together with the Proceedings of the Committee and the Minutes of Evidence, and may be obtained from His Majesty's Stationery Office, Adastral House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2, and through any bookseller, price 4s. net. We hope that many of our readers will procure and study this Report which has so intimate a bearing upon their lives and professional work.

It is interesting to note in the proceedings of the Committee, when they deliberated on the Draft Report proposed by

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