

## THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF NURSES.

### EVENING SESSION

Wednesday, July 22nd.

Miss J. C. Child, Overseas President, and Official Delegate of the South African Trained Nurses' Association, presided at the Evening Session of the International Congress of Nurses at Helsingfors on July 22nd, when the first speaker, on the subject "Fundamental Principles in Professional Nursing Organisations," was Miss Adda Eldredge, R.N., President of the American Nurses' Association, whose paper exigencies of space compel us to print much abridged.

#### "FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES IN PROFESSIONAL NURSING ORGANISATIONS."

Organisation is one of the natural trends of human thought and action. In ancient Rome, we find the working people banded together in *collegia*; later, different trades united in guilds. In these later days, we have the voluntary co-operation which brings together those interested in like subjects in an organisation for the promotion of interests which are common to the group. Organisation is an effective way of combining the efforts of the many for the achievement of the common good.

The fundamental principles underlying nursing are: first, education; second, skill; third, service. But these are the fundamentals underlying the *profession*. What are the fundamentals underlying the organisation of nurses in the profession in these National Associations which are represented here to-day?

First is the fact that in union there is strength, without organisation efforts are one-sided, futile, ineffective. Nursing education, after the first great step forward, became rather the handmaiden of expediency and economy, the nurse was indeed trained through drill and practice, but exploited and not educated. There was but one remedy for this, legislation, and legislation can be obtained only by united action, united pressure, brought to bear on legislators. Therefore, legislation controlling the education and practice of nursing is one of the fundamental reasons for nursing organisations.

Nursing being a profession which has grown up side by side with that of medicine, at times growing faster and away from medicine, naturally has been dominated by the medical profession, their own growth having been facilitated through the nurse. There has naturally been an effort on one side to continue the domination, on the other to escape, and we

would place as a second fundamental the control of the nursing profession by nurses.

That the hospital has been the field for the training of the nurse, her laboratory if you will, has tended to bring all her education inside the hospital, and perhaps a third principle might be the bringing through organised effort the basic scientific education of the nurse out of the hospital and into the university or technical school.

The importance of the individual can not be overlooked. Stimulating responsibility in the individual, through development of her ability to work with others, is an important principle of organisation.

There must be great care taken to preserve the professional spirit and if we are to have the professional spirit, it is

supposed that when the calling is of the confidential nature of nursing that it should be restricted to women of honour acting with reference to a high standard. The expert cannot raise the tone of his calling unless he is shielded from quacks and charlatans, so the first step in the creation of a profession is the elimination or exclusion of the unfit. Therefore, laws are passed to regulate who may practise nursing.

The professional spirit is the antithesis of the commercial spirit. The professional spirit implies one grade of work only, our best, whether one is to be paid or is working for charity; loyal to the interests for which we are working even against the will of others; we leave a case rather than do the wrong thing. Like the physician, we keep the secrets entrusted to us, putting service before gain. Obligation is placed on members of the profession to devote themselves to the interests of society even at risk of life.

We need support in nursing standards and also a great deal of thought and care given by the best minds in the profession to preserve the spiritual values of our profession, values which are not pecuniary, such as education, public health,

scientific progress, moral tone, ideals of life, good citizenship. We fail if we do not appreciate that, even our laws must be considered as means and not in themselves ends.

There are certain things which we must preserve in all organisations. First, we must secure to the individual members a voice and a share in determining our policies.

Too often, the executive board feels that the members of an organisation cannot be trusted and, therefore, it is too closely ruled by the executive board; too little information as to policies and reasons for action given to the participating groups.



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