

NURSING IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE SELECT COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON NURSING HOMES (REGISTRATION).

The Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed "to consider and enquire into the question of the inspection and supervision of Nursing Homes, and to report what legislation, if any, is necessary and desirable for this purpose," met for the first time, with Sir Cyril Cobb in the Chair, on March 25th.

Evidence on behalf of the Ministry of Health.

The first witnesses called were Mr. L. G. Brock, C.B., Assistant Secretary, and Mr. Gwyer, Legal Adviser to the Ministry of Health.

The Chairman questioned Mr. Brock as to the position of Maternity Homes, the Registration of which was then under the consideration of Standing Committee A of the House of Commons, in connection with the Midwives and Maternity Homes Bill, to which Mr. Brock replied that a Nursing Home was not a Maternity Home, though some took in both classes of cases. Some people might wonder why the Ministry was in favour of the Registration of Maternity Homes and was neutral as to the others. The Ministry was convinced as to the desirability of registering Maternity Homes as such, but there was no demand on the part of Local Authorities for the registration of Nursing Homes as such. The Minister thought there was a special case for inspecting Maternity Homes. Without such a power to the Local Authorities under the Midwives' Acts there was a danger of the employment in the less reputable Homes of unqualified women as midwives, and apart from carelessness or deliberate neglect such Homes might be used for baby farming. The Ministry was of opinion that if registration of Nursing Homes were recommended the definition should include any premises intended to be used for the reception of persons suffering from any sickness, injury, or bodily or mental infirmity for the purpose of providing such persons with nursing where any payment or reward was made, or promised, by or on behalf of any person so received.

Questioned by Miss Wilkinson, as to the proposal of the College of Nursing, Ltd., that the head of a Nursing Home should always be a registered nurse, Mr. Gwyer said that there were so many registered nurses available that such a condition appeared needless.

Evidence on behalf of the British Medical Association.

On March 30th, Dr. J. W. Bone, Dr. Courtenay Lord, and Dr. Fothergill were examined together in respect of evidence submitted by the British Medical Association, which had submitted a Memorandum, stating that the Representative Body of the Association at its meeting in Bath last July, had considered the Bill introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Gerald Hurst last year, and had instructed the Council actively to oppose any such bill which did not comply with three conditions laid down by the Representative Body. The first condition was that the bill should provide for representation of the local medical profession on any local committee formed by the authority for supervising nursing homes. The Association held that delegation to such local committees should be compulsory, and that doctors and nurses should sit on all such committees. The second condition was that the bill should secure that all case sheets and medical records were strictly confidential, access being only permitted to the medical profession. The third condition was that the bill should not apply to premises under the control of a registered medical practitioner.

The witnesses strongly objected to the inspection of premises of this kind, instancing a statement by a Member of the Association, who had a Home in the North of England,

that if a locally prominent person were in his home, and the records were open to inspection by a committee, it would be almost impossible to prevent that patient's medical record from becoming locally known.

In regard to cases received by medical practitioners into their own homes, Dr. Fothergill remarked, "our houses are where we live with our families, and by inspection the family aspect, so valuable for patients, would be destroyed."

Evidence on behalf of the College of Nursing, Ltd.

Miss E. S. Rundle, Secretary of the College of Nursing, Ltd., said that its members were in favour of the Registration of Nursing Homes, because they felt that the public was not sufficiently protected. Unqualified women were entrusted with the care of the sick. They received that information both from nurses and patients, principally the former.

Miss Rundle considered it ideal that every nurse in a Nursing Home should be fully trained, and hoped that that time would come. In relation to the question of expense, she said that Homes run by persons who were not qualified were some of the most expensive.

Amongst other unsatisfactory conditions prevalent in some Homes, she mentioned: Lack of equipment, and very poor accommodation for the Nursing Staff. This reacted on the patients if the nurses did not get sufficient sleep. The College of Nursing favoured inspection, and thought Homes managed both by doctors and nurses should be inspected. In some cases a doctor might be the best inspector, but in the majority she thought a registered nurse would be best. Inspection should include inquiry as to the size of the Home, and number of the nursing staff, and the proportion who were trained, equipment, linen, and the methods of disinfection in infectious cases, and the arrangements for segregation. Asked by the Chairman to give a concrete case in illustration of unsatisfactory conditions, she related that in one case an appendix case had been put into a bed from which the body of a patient, who had just died of cancer had been removed, without the disinfection of bedstead or mattress. Inspection would help to prevent such things owing to the fear of their being discovered.

Registration of Nursing Homes was in force in many British Dominions, and, she was informed, worked satisfactorily.

Christian Scientists object to Inspection.

On April 15th two gentlemen gave evidence on behalf of Christian Scientists, and objected to the inspection of their Nursing Homes, of which they said there were three in London. There was, they said, nothing secret in their methods, their great objection was that they would be inspected by persons who did not understand the principles of Christian Science, and they had a strong objection to control and supervision by such persons. Their Headquarters were at Boston, U.S.A., and some forty nurses had been trained there, and registered by them. Ten of these were in this country.

Evidence of a Clergyman and a State Registered Nurse.

On April 20th, strong evidence in favour of the Registration of Nursing Homes, was given by the Rev. S. K. Anderson, Vicar of St. Barnabas, Epsom, formerly of Wimbledon, and Miss Cardross Grant, S.R.N., formerly a district visitor in that place.

Mr. Anderson spoke of his experiences while at Wimbledon, in connection with three nursing homes with which he was well acquainted.

There was one home in particular where there were from sixteen to twenty patients housed. There were four not too large bedrooms, with a bed in each corner. The staff consisted of the matron and her husband, one assistant nurse, and a maid of all work. The charge to the patients was

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)