

NURSING IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

NURSING HOMES (REGISTRATION) BILL.

As we briefly notified in our last issue the Nursing Homes Registration Bill passed its Second Reading on April 1st.

Mrs. Philipson, in moving that the Bill be now read a Second time, reviewed the main provisions as reported in the Parliamentary Debates, from which we quote.

"I find myself in an unusually fortunate position, because the principle embodied in the Bill has already been approved by a Select Committee of this House. Hon. Members who have read the Report of the Select Committee, under the Chairmanship of the Hon. Member for Fulham (Sir C. Cobb), will have seen that the issues involved were carefully explored and that evidence was taken from a representative body of witnesses. The Committee came to the conclusion that the existence of a genuine need for the registration and supervision of nursing homes was fully established. On arriving at this conclusion, they emphasised a number of facts which clearly emerged from the evidence placed before them. In the first place, the premises of many nursing homes are structurally defective and unsuitable for the purpose to which they are devoted. Secondly, the Committee were deeply impressed with the urgent need for registration and supervision, particularly in regard to that class of nursing home that caters for poor people and senile chronic cases. In the third place, they considered that in many nursing homes the accommodation for the nursing staff was seriously defective.

"Having concluded that the case had been clearly established for the registration of nursing homes, the Select Committee gave careful attention to the problem of the machinery by which such registration could most appropriately be put into operation. The House will be aware that in the areas of certain progressive local authorities, such as London and Manchester, they have already in operation local Acts providing for the registration of maternity homes; and in 1926 Parliament passed a general Act which provided, *inter alia*, for the registration of maternity nurses. The Select Committee came definitely to the conclusion that the registration and supervision of maternity homes should be made a part of one comprehensive scheme covering all nursing homes. Following the principle adopted in the Midwives and Maternity Homes Act, 1926, the Select Committee recommended that the authorities to administer any system of registration should be the local authorities, namely, the county councils and the county borough councils under the general supervision of the Ministry of Health.

"The definition of 'Qualified nurse' in Clause 9 brings it into relation with the Nurses Registration Act, 1919, and I think that in some ways this Bill, providing for the registration of nursing homes, is the logical consequence of the Nurses Registration Act. That Act was a notable step forward in placing the nursing profession on a better recognised footing, and in improving the care and treatment of the sick. One of the important effects of this Bill will be to secure that proper qualifications on the part of the nursing staff shall be one of the conditions under which nursing homes may be registered. The last Clause to which I would draw the attention of the House is Clause 10, Sub-section (3) of which provides for proper safeguards for the repeal of local legislation. I think this rather carries out the underlying idea of the Select Committee when they recommended that nursing homes should be brought under one comprehensive scheme, and it is very desirable that this general Act should supersede such local Acts as are in operation in various parts of the country."

(The Definition Clause lays down that a qualified Nurse

is "A person registered in the general part of the Register of Nurses.")

The Seconder of the Motion was Mr. Gerald Hurst, and a large number of Members took part in the debate.

We refer those interested to the Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), obtainable from His Majesty's Stationery Office, Adastral House, Kingsway, London, W.C., for April 1st.

APRIL 7th.

GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL; CO-OPTION OF MEMBERS.

In the House of Commons on April 7th, Mr. Kelly asked the Minister of Health whether he is aware that over four years ago Miss Maud Wiese was, on the nomination of the Asylum Workers' Union, elected a member of the General Nursing Council as a representative of working nurses; that recently Miss Wiese resigned from the Council and a Matron was co-opted in her place; and whether, in view of the provision in the schedule to the Nurses Registration Act, 1919, that in co-opting a member to fill a vacancy the Council shall, so far as practicable, select a person who is representative of the same interests as those represented by the vacating member, and that a representative of working Nurses was nominated by the Asylum Workers' Union to fill the vacancy, he can take any steps to have the matter reconsidered and the vacancy filled in accordance with the Act?

Mr. Chamberlain: I understand that Miss Wiese was elected by the Nurses on the supplementary part of the Register for Mental Nurses, having been nominated not by any Union but by Registered Nurses in accordance with the rules governing election to the Council. Her successor, who is also a Mental Nurse, was co-opted by the Council as representing the same interests, and their selection does not appear to be in any way inconsistent with the schedule. In any case, however, I have no jurisdiction to intervene.

Miss Wilkinson: Is the right hon. gentleman not aware that the recent Report of the Select Committee on Nursing made a very strong recommendation that the balance between Matrons and working Nurses should be maintained; the whole point is that it is a Matron who is co-opted rather than a working Nurse, and this destroys the balance suggested by the Select Committee?

Mr. Chamberlain: That is not the point raised in the question, and I can only repeat that I have no jurisdiction in the matter.

Mr. Kelly: Does the right hon. gentleman realise that this question is in keeping with the supplementary question put by my hon. friend, that is, to maintain the balance which has been suggested?

Mr. Chamberlain: No, sir. The hon. Member's question, as I understood it, suggested that in order to comply with the schedule, the Council ought to have co-opted someone nominated by some particular Union, and I have endeavoured to show in my answer that that is not the case.

Mr. Kelly: Is the right hon. gentleman not aware that the point of asking for representation from that quarter is to have the particular interests of Mental Nurses represented?

The Minister of Health is absolutely correct. Miss Wiese took her seat on the General Nursing Council for England and Wales as the elected representative of all Registered Mental Nurses, not as the representative of any Society, and the lady now co-opted to this casual vacancy is a Registered Mental Nurse, and under the same obligations.

As the term of office of the Council comes to an end in December, the Mental Nurses on the Register will have an opportunity of nominating and electing any representatives they choose, one man and one woman providing they hold the necessary qualifications.

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