

Professor Robertson alleged that General Hospital Nurses looked down on Mental Nurses and would not have them on the State Register, and it was through the influence of the Association that Mental Nurses were included in the Act. They had to send a deputation to the Prime Minister to appeal to him to have Mental Nurses put upon the State Register, yet this Act of Parliament had proved a failure. The Royal Medico-Psychological Association, which had held Examinations and awarded Certificates for 40 years, were prepared to help, within reasonable limits, in co-operating with the Council in having Mental Nurses placed on the State Register. They would submit themselves to the General Nursing Council regarding the syllabus of the course of training, they were willing to allow their examinations to be inspected by the General Nursing Council, so that the Council could see they conformed to the rules and regulations. In the third place, they were prepared, if the General Nursing Council thought that any nurse was not suitable to be placed on the Register, although she had the Certificate of the R.M.P.A., to accept the decision of the Council, and not regard her as one of their nurses. This approval was made with the object of co-operating with and assisting the General Nursing Council.

Professor Robertson concluded, "You ask me what suggestions I have to make. I might just as well put the whole question the other way, and say that Parliament has passed an Act as to the Registration of Mental Nurses. You have made rules and regulations with regard to these Nurses who are to be placed on the State Register. These rules and regulations have failed, and we are greatly distressed at the fact that our highly-trained Mental Nurses are not on the State Register as we wish, and we ask you what steps you propose to take in order to remove this state of collapse or fiasco in connection with these said nurses, which we think is not a healthy state of affairs."

The Chairman's Reply.

Miss Musson, Chairman of the General Nursing Council, speaking in its name, invited any other members of the deputation to speak, but, as none wished to do so, she said it might be as well if she gave the result of the consideration of the letter from the Royal Medico-Psychological Association which the Council had made, taking it paragraph by paragraph.

Dr. Robertson had said that the word co-operation was at the root of the difficulty, it occurred in this letter also.

She then pointed out that the word "co-operation" might be interpreted differently. Co-operation might involve working together, and as a statutory body the General Nursing Council had from the first laid down the Rule that it did not associate itself with voluntary associations. This was not said in any spirit of antagonism, it was simply stating a fact. The Council realised that if they were to work with voluntary associations in this country they would get into difficulties, and it was not a proper thing for a statutory body to do. The Council had always been, and she thought always would be, very glad indeed to consult or take advice from any expert body. The Council considered that they had been appointed by Parliament to do a certain piece of work, and that it was their duty, and nobody else's, to do that piece of work.

In reference to a questionnaire addressed by the R.M.P.A. to the Recognised Training Schools, Miss Musson pointed out that it was addressed to, and answered by, the Medical Superintendents. Reference was thus entirely to the Medical Superintendents. The General Nursing Council, therefore, considered that the opinions expressed were those of Medical Superintendents who, they pointed out, were members of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association.

The Council considered that the training, education, and control of Mental Nurses should not be left so entirely under the control of the Medical Superintendents. Nurses were members of a different profession, and had reached a stage in which a greater degree of self-government was necessary for their development.

It was true of every branch. General trained nurses did not improve until more scope was allowed in their training, and until their control and education came more directly under their professional heads.

The Council dissented from the view of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association expressed in its letter of February 6th that the unregistered nurse has no disability in regard to the practice of nursing except that she was unable to call herself a "Registered" nurse. The Chairman pointed out that unregistered nurses are already finding great difficulty in obtaining higher posts in institutions, posts in the Public Health Services, on Private Nursing Co-operations, charge posts in Nursing Homes, and also posts overseas, and that this disability would increase as the fact of Registration became more widely known. The law already demanded that certain posts should be held only by Registered Nurses.

She further pointed out that the rules made under the Nurses' Registration Act were an integral part of the Act, and that unless and until those rules were altered the General Nursing Council had the duty of examining.

In regard to the figures given in the above letter, it was not possible to judge of them, as there were no statistics on which to base an opinion. The Council could only repeat that, in their opinion, the advantages of Registration had not yet been properly put before the Mental Nurses.

On the question of fees for examination, the Chairman pointed out that so long as nurses were content to accept voluntary service from examiners they could not expect to have thoroughly independent and satisfactory examinations. No one could fail to appreciate the many voluntary services of the members of the Medical Profession, but from the nurses' point of view, the services of unpaid examiners must be looked upon as a charity. The smaller fees of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association did not provide an independent examination, neither did the passing of the Association's examination entitle the Nurses to a legal status. If the Mental Nurses wished to belong to an independent and self-respecting profession, they must be prepared to meet the expense of an independent examination. From the very first the Council had declined to accept the certificate of any other body for Registration except during the period of grace. It was held that delegation of examination to another body was not satisfactory, and that to hand over their statutory functions to an outside body, and especially to one composed of members of another profession, would jeopardise the nurses' independence.

In conclusion, the Chairman said that every profession must stand upon its own feet. She was sure the members of the Medical Profession would agree to that. To make the Nursing Profession, or any branch of it, dependent for its status on another profession (however much they admired that profession) would be to give up the rights which had been won for them by Act of Parliament. They looked on the Act as an enfranchisement of the profession. They held that enfranchisement very dear, and felt that they had no right to give it up for Mental Nurses any more than for any other branch of the profession.

Those who took part in the discussion which followed were Miss Lloyd-Still, Colonel Nathan Raw, Miss Sparshott, Dr. Fawcett, Mr. Blackman and Miss Cox-Davies. Miss Sparshott was of opinion that nurses in Mental Hospitals

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