

## "THE INTERNATIONAL NURSING REVIEW."

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We ask members of the National Councils of Nurses affiliated to the International Council of Nurses to note that the first section of the history of the International Council by Miss M. Breay, in collaboration with Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, was published in the July issue, and will be continued in succeeding numbers.

## MENTAL HOSPITALS ASSOCIATION.

### LUNACY LAWS.

The Annual Meeting of the Mental Hospitals Association was recently held at the Guildhall, London.

Sir William Hodgson, who presided, said that the times were difficult for both Parliament and administrative councils. Party legislation for the time being would become impossible, but lunacy and mental deficiency might be taken as questions which were above party and were truly national in importance and character. If it were conceded that lunacy was not a matter for party politics, it ought not to be difficult to get Parliament to deal with it. They might not agree with all the suggestions of the Royal Commission's report, but there were some which would be likely to form a Bill that would supply some of their acutely felt needs.

A Lunacy Bill was certainly overdue, and, if not overloaded with contentious matter, would meet with a ready welcome by local authorities. He suggested that an early conference of representatives of local authorities should be called to consider the question of a new Lunacy Amendment Bill. Such a Bill would meet with general support if it were formed on enabling rather than compulsory lines and did not give any powers of larger control by the central Government Department. It was hoped that the new Cabinet would realise that the spirit of local government should be protected from too much arbitrary interference by Government officials, who were apt to be greedy of the power of giving instructions rather than suggestion and information.

A resolution was passed expressing "deepest regret that another year had passed without the introduction of legislation to reform the lunacy laws." The Royal Commission had published its report in 1926, and "the strongest possible representations had for many years been made by the association and other important bodies urging the Government to take action, but year succeeded year with the same deplorable situation to be faced."

### Certification and Registration of Mental Nurses.

It was resolved that the whole question of the certification and registration of mental nurses be referred to the Executive Council for their consideration and report.

We hope the Nurses' Organisations will supply the Mental Hospitals' Association with their reasons for opposing the depreciation of the One Portal to the Nurses State Register as proposed by the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, and also keep a vigilant eye upon any Bill promoted by the Mental Hospitals Association, which might include clauses referring to certification and registration of Mental Nurses, who now enjoy legal status under the Nurses' Registration Acts, administered by the General Nursing Councils for England and Wales, and for Scotland.

## THE MENTAL NURSES' EXAMINATION.

We quote the following report from the *Lancet* of July 27th, referring to the discussion alluded to above on the certification and registration of Mental Nurses, as nurses should keep themselves fully informed on this vital question.

"This vexed problem again came up for consideration, and an acute difference of opinion became manifest. For thirty years the examination and certification of mental nurses was in the hands of the Medico-Psychological Association and the syllabus was drawn up by medical superintendents with reference to the special needs of the work they control. With the incorporation of the General Nursing Council a difficult situation arose. As Dr. G. H. Grills expressed it in proposing a motion, the G.N.C. did not want the advice of medical superintendents, and would not have it, and in his opinion most medical superintendents found the syllabus proposed by the Council quite impracticable. His motion was:—

That this meeting views with some apprehension the existing unsatisfactory conditions regarding the national registration of mental nurses, and urges the General Nursing Council for England and Wales to provide that the possession of the certificate of proficiency in mental nursing awarded by the Royal Medico-Psychological Association shall entitle the holder thereof to be registered, on payment of the fees, in the mental section of the register of nurses of the General Nursing Council.

He pleaded strongly the difficulty of sparing nurses from a mental hospital to go to a distant centre for examination, and of their finding the money for fares and lodgings, as well as the five-guinea fee, and declared that a first-year probationer trained on M.P.A. lines was more use in a mental hospital than a fully registered general nurse. She must acquire in her first year an elementary knowledge of mental nursing and of first-aid, or she was useless in the wards; the G.N.C. syllabus postponed these subjects to the final examination. It was impossible, he thought, to have a single portal of entry for every kind of special nurse. Not more than two mental hospitals in England and Wales made the G.N.C. examination compulsory, and soon there would not be a single registered nurse in the mental hospital service, which would be a serious situation.

### Deceiving their Probationers.

On the other hand, Dr. J. I. Russell (N. Riding, Yorks) and Dr. J. F. Francis (Leicester), supported by Dr. D. Rice (Norwich) and Dr. R. Eager (Devon), took the attitude that the position must be accepted and some compromise found by the medical superintendents. The General Nursing Council, they argued, was a statutory body, and its formation had undoubtedly been a forward step. It had now decided finally that it would not delegate its powers to any voluntary body, and that it regarded control of examinations as a part of its duties. This being so, its examination was the legal one and must be accepted sooner or later, and the medical superintendents were, in a sense, deceiving their probationers by encouraging them to take another diploma and dismissing them if they did not. Dr. Francis said his committee had recognised the inevitability of the situation, and had given up training for the M.P.A. certificate. The examination fee was repaid by the bonus given to the nurses who had passed the examination. He had found no insuperable difficulty in teaching the requisite special subjects during the first year while training probationers for the G.N.C. examination, or in sending the nurses to the examination centre. He suggested that the M.P.A. might organise a higher special examination to be taken by mental nurses after registration. Finally, it was decided to refer the matter to the executive Committee for consideration and report."

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