

had the Medical Superintendents adopted the following course:—

(1) Assembled the probationers in training, informed them of the passing of the Nurses' Registration Act, and the status which would be conferred thereby on Registered Nurses.

(2) Explained to applicants for admission as probationers the importance to them of State Registration, informing them that during their training they would be prepared for the State Examinations, and that they would be required as a condition of admission to the school to give an undertaking that they would sit for these examinations.

Instead, the R.M.P.A. limits its "concern" to recommending that the unfortunate probationer should sit for two examinations—the latter solely in order to become eligible for State Registration.

When the Medical Superintendents, in solid phalanx with very few exceptions strongly support and train for the examination of their own Association, who can doubt that the large majority of inexperienced probationers will consider it all sufficient, and will not subject themselves to the ordeal of a second examination.

#### Clause 25.

The letter of the R.M.P.A. states that "the Mental Hospital Nurse and the Local Authorities were not persuaded that there were any advantages in State Registration, despite the fact that the Association was always a supporter of this policy, and had used all its influence to have mental nurses included in the Nurses' Registration Act."

N.B.—The M.P.A. never associated itself with the Societies joined together in the Central Committee for State Registration to promote the Nurses' Registration Bill.

#### Clauses 28 and 29.

The R.M.P.A. stated that:—

"the only solution which seemed possible . . . was for the Association to offer to adapt its educational machinery to the requirements of the General Nursing Councils. . ."

"It meant that the General Nursing Councils would accept certain voluntary services in place of much they now paid for and re-claimed from the mental nurse in fees. . ."

The General Nursing Council for England and Wales replied *re* Para. 29.

"It is the opinion of the Council that nurses should no longer depend solely on examinations conducted by voluntary bodies and voluntary examiners. The small fees charged by the Royal Medico-Psychological Association are insufficient to provide an independent examination, and, moreover, the fact of having passed that examination does not grant legal status to the nurse. In their own interests the mental nurses should undoubtedly be prepared to meet the expense of an independent examination."

#### Comment of General Secretary, R.M.P.A.

"R.M.P.A. examiners receive a fee which covers all personal expenses. The services of the examiners are voluntary in some respects only. In other respects examiners are paid a fee proportionately to work done. The Association has no expenditure in regard to the places where the examinations are held; this is perhaps the main economy. *The Local Authorities foot this bill.* Nurses are expected to pay a reasonable fee for examination certificate and registration, and if this can be done economically, why shouldn't it?"

N.B.—We direct attention to the statement of the General Secretary of the R.M.P.A. that the Local Authorities, in part, foot the Bills for its Examinations for Mental Nurses. The certificate of the R.M.P.A. confers no legal status upon Mental Nurses, and taxpayers may rightly object to footing the Bill of an Association which is running

a rival examination, and a rival Register to those of the General Nursing Councils which are authorised by Parliament to conduct the only examinations by which legal status is attained.

#### Clause 37.

In conclusion, it is stated that "the Council of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association has decided that it will not recommend the Association to ratify any proposed agreement which will not be reasonably retrospective in its operation."

The comment of the General Nursing Council upon this Paragraph is:—

"The Council wish to emphasize the fact that the period of grace was fixed in the Rules, and was very widely advertised, and that to re-open the Register to 'existing' and 'Intermediate' nurses without examination would not only create confusion, but would be unfair to those many thousands of nurses who, since June, 1925, have registered by Examination.

"The Council can but repeat their opinion that the advisability of taking the State Examinations has not been sufficiently made known to the nurses in some of the mental hospitals, and they note that no adequate explanation was offered by the representatives of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association for the failure of the majority of Mental Nurses to enter for the State Examinations in order to become State registered."

It would appear that the Local Authorities do not clearly apprehend the present position, and the time seems opportune for a Circular addressed to them from the Ministry of Health stating that the Nurses' Registration Act has now been in force for just on ten years, that the only examination for mental nurses leading to legal status is that authorised by Parliament, in England and Wales is that conducted by the General Nursing Council, and therefore that probationers in institutions under their control should be prepared for this examination, and required to take it, and that it is unfair to the public, and unjust to mental nurses, that this course should not be adopted.

#### Appendices.

The following appendices to the Application of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association are also published:—

1. The copy of a letter to the Minister of Health, signed by its General Secretary (Dr. R. Worth) asking by what machinery the Rules of the General Nursing Council can be amended or revoked, and whether an Amendment to the Nurses' Registration Act would now be necessary before the General Nursing Council could accept the Certificate of Proficiency in Mental Nursing as qualifying for admission to the Supplementary Part of the Register for Mental Nurses, with the Reply of the Minister (the Right Honble. Neville Chamberlain, M.P.), explaining that it is for the General Nursing Council to formulate any new Rule on the subject, and that until such a Rule is formulated the Minister cannot undertake to express an opinion on the question.

2. Counsel's opinion for the Royal Medico-Psychological Association.

As a Member of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales and Chairman of its Mental Nursing Standing Committee, Dr. Worth should be acquainted with the procedure for amending the Rules.

In our opinion, as a Member of the General Nursing Council, which realises its responsibility for maintaining inviolate the conditions of admission to the State Register of Nurses, and as the General Secretary of an Association which is promoting actively a campaign for their disintegration, Dr. Worth's dual position is totally untenable, and incompatible with loyalty to both. He should resign one or the other.

*previous page*

*next page*