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EDITORIAL.

WE CALL UPON THE PUBLIC TO PROTECT THE MENTALLY SICK AND THEIR NURSES.

At the sixteenth Annual Conference of the National Asylum Workers' Union, held at Great Yarmouth on July 9th and 10th, under the Presidency of Mr. C. Bartlett, the following resolution, proposed by Mr. Tizzard (Cotford) and seconded by Mr. Lake (Devizes) was carried as reported in the *N.A.W. Magazine*:—

"That this Conference considers the time has arrived when the G.N.C. has ceased to serve the interests of the mental nurse, from the point of view of registration, and urges the N.E.C. to take immediate steps for the establishment of a register for the exclusive registration of mental nurses, qualified by examination, and to be under the direct control of the Mental Hospitals Association, the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, and the National Asylum Workers' Union."—South Wales and South-Western Federation.

We take the earliest opportunity of drawing attention to this resolution so that Mental Nurses, and especially those now in training, may be acquainted with the peril with which they are confronted; first because if such a register were established Mental Nurses would be a class apart, instead of being a part of the Nursing Profession having equal status with other Registered Nurses, under the Nurses' Registration Acts, 1919; with the result that the training schools connected with Mental Hospitals would not attract the most desirable class of applicants for training, and the mentally afflicted—the most helpless class of patients—would suffer grievously. It is of the utmost importance that everything should be done to encourage women of the finest character to train for the care of the sick in mind.

MENTAL NURSES UNDER THE DIRECT CONTROL OF THEIR EMPLOYERS.

The proposal contained in the resolution is that the Mental Nurses shall not be permitted a governing body composed of a practically two thirds majority of members of their own profession elected by the Registered Nurses, but shall be under the *direct control* of their employers—medical practitioners and hospital managers. It is a disastrous proposal, to be combated by every Registered Nurse individually, and in association with others, with all the force at her command.

The three societies which it is proposed shall control the Mental Nurses of this country are, it will be noted:

1. The Mental Hospitals Association, an Association of Local Authorities who maintain Public Mental Hospitals.

2. The Royal Medico-Psychological Association composed largely of the Medical Superintendents of Mental

Hospitals, who have almost omnipotent powers within their walls, and who take power to conduct examinations, to issue certificates, and in case of misconduct, to erase the names of mental nurses from their Register if they think fit.

3. The National Asylum Workers' Union, (the name of which has now been changed to "The Mental Hospital and Institutional Workers' Union"), which is composed not of Mental Nurses only, but of every kind of worker in Mental Hospitals.

This claim for the direct government of Mental Nurses does not come from any society of Mental Nurses, and on this ground any weight which might be attached to it as coming from themselves must be discounted. It is important that publicity should be given to this aspect, or the fact that it is supported by a Trade Union which is apt to be considered as a Union of Mental Nurses, may give it a pseudo importance.

MENTAL NURSES LED INTO A BLIND ALLEY.

The Nurses' Registration Acts have never, as our readers are aware, been loyally supported by the majority of Medical Superintendents of Mental Hospitals, who prefer an examination which they themselves control, and for which the Royal Medico-Psychological Association receives the fees. Had they taken the proper course, which is especially incumbent upon them as salaried officials of State supported institutions, a large body of Registered Mental Nurses would by this time have been built up, trained according to the Syllabus approved by the Minister of Health and sanctioned by Parliament, whose knowledge had been tested by an independent examination held by the General Nursing Council (the Authority appointed by Parliament to discharge this duty,) and who would have taken their place with those of other branches as having the privileges and honourable position in the body politic conferred by legal status. It is a cruel injustice to many young nurses, trained during the ten years which have elapsed since the passing of the Nurses' Registration Acts, that they should, at the outset of their chosen career, have been ill-advised, misled, and led into a blind alley. Later in life they will realise to their cost the disabilities which will beset them for lack of the status which it was their right to obtain and possess.

When the history of the times comes to be written, it will be realised that those whose duty it was to acquaint them with the law of the land, and to advise them of the supreme importance of complying with it, and who failed to do so because they wished to retain power in their own hands, played an ignoble part indeed.

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