

NURSING PROFESSION (WAGES AND HOURS).

A BILL

to lay down minimum wages and maximum working hours for the nursing profession.

Be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

APPLICATION OF ACT.

1.—This Act shall apply to all state registered nurses (hereinafter in this Act referred to as nurses) and persons training at a duly authorised school for the purpose of becoming state registered nurses (in this Act hereinafter referred to as probationers) whether any such persons are under the age of twenty-one years or not and who have entered into or work under a contract of service with an employer (including a hospital board of management) and whose duties consist wholly or partially of attending or administering to any persons suffering from injury, disease, infirmity or malady.

PROVISIONS AS TO HOURS AND PERIODS OF EMPLOYMENT.

2.—(1) The period of employment for all nurses and probationers shall not exceed—

(a) forty-four hours during any period of one week;

(b) eight hours during any one period of twenty-four hours except as hereinafter provided.

(2) No nurse or probationer shall be employed continuously for more than four hours without an interval of at least half an hour for a meal.

(3) There shall be an interval of at least twelve hours between any two periods of employment referred to in section two (1) (b) of this Act.

(4) Where it is necessary for the purpose of saving or attempting to save human life the period of employment may exceed eight hours during any one period of twenty-four hours provided such period of employment does not exceed twelve hours, subject always to subsection (1) (a) of this section, and subsection (3) of this section shall apply to such periods of employment as if such periods were eight hours each.

(5) Where the period of employment exceeds the maximum period provided in subsection (1) (b) of this section remuneration for the period in excess of eight hours shall be at the rate of one and a half times the normal rate, such normal rate to be calculated from the yearly remuneration provided for in section three of this Act.

PROVISIONS AS TO WAGES.

3.—(1) In all cases where board, lodging and laundry are provided at the employer's expense—

(a) The remuneration of a probationer shall be at a rate of not less than—

(i) Forty pounds per annum for the first year of service;

(ii) Fifty pounds per annum for the second year of service; and

(iii) Sixty pounds per annum for the third and subsequent years of service:

(b) The remuneration of a nurse shall be at a rate of not less than seventy-five pounds per annum for the first year after becoming a state registered nurse and shall be increased annually by an amount of not less than five pounds, and so that the remuneration shall be at a rate of not less than one hundred pounds per annum for the sixth and subsequent years of service.

(2) In all cases where board, lodging and laundry is not provided at the employer's expense the remuneration provided for in subsection (1) of this section shall be

increased in each case by not less than one hundred pounds per annum.

(3) In all cases where a nurse or a probationer is employed for a period less than a year the remuneration shall be in proportion to the yearly remuneration payable to such nurse or probationer in accordance with subsections (1) and (2) of this section.

(4) Where remuneration is paid to a nurse or a probationer in accordance with subsection (5) of section two of this Act such remuneration shall be in addition to the remuneration paid to such nurse or probationer under the preceding subsection of this section.

SHORT TITLE AND COMMENCEMENT.

4.—(1) This Act may be cited as the Nursing Profession (Wages and Hours) Act, 1931.

(2) This Act shall come into operation on the first Monday following the expiration of three months after the date of the passing of this Act.

THE BACKERS OF THE BILL.

The Bill is supported by the Right Honourable F. W. Jowett (Bradford, E.), Lab., Miss Jennie Lee (Lanark, N.), Lab., Mr. E. Sandham (Kirkdale), Lab., Mr. John Strachey (Aston), Lab., Mr. E. F. Wise (Leicester, E.), Lab., Mr. W. J. Brown (Wolverhampton, W.), Lab., Mr. J. McGovern (Shettleston), Lab., Rev. C. Stephen (Camlachie), Lab., Mr. Oliver Baldwin (Dudley), Lab., Mr. J. H. Alpass (Bristol, Central), Lab.

PROMPT ACTION BY THE REGISTERED NURSES' ORGANISATIONS.

The "Nursing Profession Bill" was not procurable until four days before it was down for Second Reading in the Orders of the Day on Thursday, February 26th, giving very little time to master its contents, and take action in the House of Commons concerning it. Having realised its disastrous effects to the personal and economic liberty of the Registered Nurse action was at once taken by the Royal British Nurses' Association, and the British College of Nurses to block the Second Reading until such time as due consideration could be given to it. Twelve hundred letters were cyclostyled and folded, twelve hundred envelopes addressed, stamped, closed and posted in one day (the sort of Field Day we were used to in the good old days of the Registration fight), so that every Member of Parliament was informed before the 26th inst. that the promoters of the Bill had failed to consult the Registered Nurses Organisations concerning the crude legislation it was proposed to thrust upon them, and which would deprive them of power of contract with their employers, and ruin their private practice.

By return of post many letters of sympathy were received and when under "Votes and Proceedings of the House of Commons" on Thursday, 26th February, the Bill came up for Second Reading, Sir John Ganzoni (Member for Ipswich) rose in his place and "objected" according to rule the Bill could not be proceeded with, and the Second Reading was deferred till Thursday, March 5th, on which date Sir John Ganzoni again deferred the Second Reading by objecting, thus rendering the Nursing Profession a very signal service for which it owes him sincere gratitude.

We have to thank the *Morning Post* and the *Daily Mail* for sympathetic publicity.

A letter appeared in *The Times* on February 25th, signed by Miss M. E. Sparshott, President of the College of Nursing, expressing its disapproval of the Bill.

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