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EDITORIAL.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN AND THE TRAINING OF NURSES.

The National Council of Women at its Annual Meeting to be held at Torquay, from 9th to 13th October, will consider a long list of Resolutions on the Agenda for the Council Meetings on the 11th and 12th, one of which is of special interest to the Nursing Profession, as it proposes to alter the statutory regulations of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, now applied under its authority for the Preliminary Examination of nurses in training.

The Resolution as follows is to be proposed by Mrs. Keynes, J.P., of the Cambridge Branch, and seconded by Miss E. R. Gwatkin, B.A., M.A., Head Mistress of Streatham High School and an appointed member of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales:—

RESOLUTION.

Training of Nurses.

"That this Council is of opinion that in order to increase the number of suitable candidates for the Nursing Profession it should be made possible for pupils to take part of the preliminary examination before leaving a secondary school, thus stimulating their interest and relieving the pressure of the first year in hospital."

Two important facts become at once apparent in connection with this crude recommendation, advanced in the first instance by the self-constituted *Lancet* Commission.

1. How extraordinarily ignorant the majority of laywomen still are of the basic principles of sound nursing education, as now organised in efficient Nurse Training Schools—based as it is, on the careful selection of probationers of vocational character from cultured antecedents, by experts; and (2) How self-confident are these same women in venturing to attempt to organise a highly technical profession without consulting the organised members of which it is composed. The assumption that young girls of 15 or 16 educated in Secondary Schools (the Americans are now demanding College graduates as probationers) selected by women who have never come into clinical association with the sick in hospital wards, and who are therefore ignorant of the elements of nursing education—are qualified after superficial instruction to sit for the Preliminary Examination in Trained Nursing, is a fallacy which could only result in lowering the standard of probationers now selected by the professional heads of Nursing Schools.

We feel sure the proposer and seconder of this

disastrous Resolution would make no claim to define educational methods where candidates for the Professions of Medicine, the Law, and other State Registered Professions are concerned, and the fact that they have omitted to consult the Organised Associations of Registered Nurses affiliated to the National Council of Women, concerning their own affairs before placing their Resolution on the Agenda Paper, makes their assumption of authority the more objectionable.

What qualifications, it may be asked, are possessed by Head Mistresses of Secondary Schools for defining the professional education of Registered Nurses?

As a professional pioneer for the statutory regulation of Nursing Education, now provided for in the Nurses' Registration Acts of 1919, we claim that such lay teachers are not qualified to interfere in the highly technical training of nurses, and that their influence should be restricted to encouraging such of their pupils as possess specially high personal characteristics and a vocational spirit to adopt nursing *when they arrive at the years of discretion*—and no further meddle therein.

The fact is that the public, and especially unprofessional women, have failed to recognise the status acquired by the Nursing Profession through the Nurses' Registration Acts, and we doubt if one in a hundred invited to vote on Mrs. Keynes' Resolution have ever read, much less studied, these Acts; Nursing is still in their opinion a sort of glorified domestic occupation concerning which they have the right to interfere and control.

Evidently our colleagues in other lands realise the importance of instructing the public in regard to nursing education, and the International Council of Nurses at its recent Meeting agreed "That all National Associations be urged to promote propaganda in order to educate the public." They feel with us that registered nurses are no longer the flotsam and jetsam of spurious benevolence, but members of a profession with the legal right to self-determination, self-government, and self-respect; and that the public must be brought to realise the changed conditions incident upon the acquisition of legal status. Moreover it is an open secret that the General Nursing Council has under consideration the demand of what are known as *The Lancet* Commission members, to split the Preliminary Examination, and until the result of such consultations are made public and referred, we presume, to its constituency of Registered Nurses for their consideration—the discussion at Torquay would appear to be premature.

It is to be hoped that the General Nursing Council will maintain its authority unimpaired as the Governing

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