

GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND AND WALES.

DEBATE ON PART I OF THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION.

Introductory.

In December, 1930, *The Lancet* appointed a self-constituted Commission on Nursing, largely composed of the laity, "to inquire into the reasons for the shortage of candidates, trained and untrained, for nursing the sick in general and special hospitals throughout the country, and to offer suggestions for making the service more attractive to women suitable for this necessary work."

Upon this Commission of twelve persons, a negligible quantity (two only), were State Registered Nurses; two, in addition to the Editor and an Assistant Editor of *The Lancet*, were registered medical practitioners; and six were lay persons.

Amongst the recommendations of this Commission were the following:—

(1) "An extensive trial should be made of combined scholarship and maintenance schemes throughout the country for girls of 16 upwards, with possible extension of such schemes to girls of 14."

"Scholarships from the Local Education Authority carrying Maintenance Grants are (the Commission states), the best way of meeting the general educational needs of girls who would otherwise leave school early." Presumably the long suffering ratepayers would have to bear the burden of this extraordinary suggestion.

(2) "Encouragement should be given to girls who have left school, and are occupied in shops or offices during the day, to study anatomy, physiology and hygiene, in evening classes in polytechnics, technical schools and evening institutes, and to take the proposed Part I of the Preliminary State examination; the same classes could be attended by girls over 17 who are working in various departments of hospitals or in convalescent homes, and possibly by first year nurses at Affiliated, Associated, or Reciprocal hospitals."

On the publication of these recommendations, those who for many years had taken part in promoting the statutory organisation of Nursing Education immediately realised their disastrously retrograde nature, and made public their conscientious objections to these proposals.

As an election of direct representatives of the Registered Nurses on the General Nursing Council for England and Wales was impending, this group took steps to enquire into the policy, in this connection, of candidates for election to the new Council, and a declaration of their views was made the chief feature in the election addresses of most of the candidates.

As a result, it was found, so far as could be ascertained, that, of the successful candidates, nine of the Registered Nurses elected were opposed to the proposed split Preliminary Examination; four were in favour of it; while the views of three were uncertain. In addition, there were nine nominated persons over whom the nurse-electorate had no control.

When the names of the nominated members of the Council were made public, it was found that the second Assistant Editor of *The Lancet*, Mrs. M. H. Kettle, and other persons in favour of the scheme promoted by *The Lancet*, had been appointed on the Governing Body of the Nursing Profession, and it is useless to deny that the selection of several was very distasteful to the majority of the Nurse-electorate.

For months past the General Nursing Council has been engaged in discussion of this vital question, and in conference upon it with the General Nursing Council for Scotland.

At the meeting of the General Nursing Council on July

22nd, 1932, the Education and Examination Committee presented a letter from the College of Nursing in regard to "Suitable Candidates for the Nursing Profession," which put forward the following resolution:—

"That Schools for Girls approved for the purpose by the General Nursing Council should include in their curriculum certain subjects of the Preliminary State Examination which can suitably be taken before entering hospital, and that these approved schools should be allowed to conduct the examination set by the General Nursing Council."

After discussion, a reply was approved to be sent by the Registrar to the College of Nursing, which included the following paragraphs:—

"I am instructed to say that the General Nursing Council have no authority to approve Schools for Girls as part of the conditions of admission to the Register, nor can they allow any other body or any persons not appointed by them to conduct their examinations.

"The suggestion that the Preliminary Examination might be divided into two parts has been considered, but the Council is of opinion that this would not be in the interests of the candidates nor of the profession. The Preliminary Examination of the General Nursing Council is not an 'Entrance' Examination, it is 'Preliminary' to the Final Examinations, and is regarded as the 'one portal' to the Nursing Profession as a whole; its integrity and independence are matters of much importance to more than one branch of the profession."

THE COUNCIL MEETING, NOVEMBER 24th, 1933.

At the Meeting of the General Nursing Council held on November 24th, the Chairman, Miss E. M. Musson, C.B.E., R.R.C., LL.D., who presided, reported (1) A letter from the Secretary of the Royal British Nurses' Association, dated September 19th, 1933, enclosing the following letter forwarded from the Association to the Minister of Health.

LETTER FROM THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION TO THE MINISTER OF HEALTH.

194, Queen's Gate,
London, S.W.7.

September 18th, 1933.

The Right Hon. The Minister of Health,

Ministry of Health, Whitehall, S.W.1.

DEAR SIR,—I am instructed to communicate with you in reference to certain proposals which, it is understood, are now receiving the consideration of the General Nursing Council in connection with the preliminary examination held by that body, and the suggested division of that examination into two parts. It is indicated that such division of the examination would involve the possibility of anatomy and physiology being taught outside the authority and curricula of the Council and the Nursing Schools. My Executive Committee consider that any such step would introduce grave dangers to the administrative independence of the Council in relation to its educational functions in the future. The Committee suggest that, if the Council would devote consideration to the formulation of a prescribed scheme of training, as provided for in the Act, thereby its educational prerogatives would be safeguarded and risks of teaching, in anatomy and physiology, being handed over to other than members of the medical and nursing professions would be avoided. Therefore the Committee would urge that, before dealing with proposals for amending the present system, the Council should use its powers under the Act and draft a prescribed scheme of training. Only on the foundation, provided by such a scheme, do we believe that consideration of any plan for altering the present scheme of examination can justifiably be undertaken.

I am, Yours very truly,

ISABEL MACDONALD, *Secretary.*

LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF GREAT BRITAIN.

(2) A letter from the General Secretary, The National Council of Women of Great Britain, dated October 18th, 1933.

Murray House, Vandon Street,
Buckingham Gate, London, S.W.1.

October 18th, 1933.

DEAR MADAM,—The National Council of Women of Great Britain, at its Annual Meeting and Conference, held in the Town

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