

eloquent advocates of the principles involved in this question, than to Miss Cochrane and Miss Macdonald.

"Now," she said, "I want to take you back to the time, in 1903, when Dr. Bedford Fenwick, Margaret Breay and myself sat down to draft the first Bill promoted in this country for the State Registration of Nurses—which was introduced into the House of Commons by Dr. Farquharson in 1904. All the essentials for self-government were included, but a most important provision in the Bill was that its application would be self-supporting. The Midwives Act placed its administration partially on the rates, with the result that any degree of self-determination was impossible, which has greatly militated against the status of midwifery as a profession.

"We claimed that if the Registered Nurses received no subsidy from the Treasury—if they entirely financed their own administration and examinations—their position in the body politic would be honourable and unassailable. All through the fifteen years during which the Nurses' Registration Bill was before Parliament, we claimed the right to pay our way, and when the Government in 1919 at last practically took over the Barnett Bill and introduced a Government measure, it included the principle of professional financial control. Hence the Registered Nurses sit on velvet, and owe no man anything.

"The Registered Nurses pay for habitation, organisation, examination, registration, including the necessary expenses of the Government's nominees—so that we claim we have a right to take a very active part in the conduct of our own affairs—and to enter a vigorous protest if those elected or nominated to our Governing Body act in opposition to our professional interests.

"We provide an income of over £30,000 a year. If we had been poor and unable to support our status, if we had been subsidised by the rates, as the midwives unfortunately are, neither the teaching nor any other profession would have been eager to supply the deficit.

"If another profession is to participate in the expenditure of our money, to which it does not subscribe, we as a profession shall be the poorer. We shall be restricted not only in education, but in evolution. The Scottish Council has arranged to split Preliminary education and examination, but who is to pay, is not divulged. The new regulations reported to the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, have omitted any allusion to finance. We have asked the Scottish Council to inform us on this point. Who pays? The parents, the State, the rates—or the Registered Nurses? Resolutions, rules, regulations are adopted for this reactionary proposal—they deal with everything but finance, and finance is the crux of the question. We nurses know where we stand now in relation to the administration of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales. We pay, they administer. But we want to know who is going to finance the hundreds of unprofessional teachers in secondary and other girls' schools, who desire to supersede our Sister Tutors and teachers in the Nurse Training Schools, and for the conduct of their examinations?

"If this scheme is thrust through by an unprofessional vote at any future time, believe me, the Nurse will pay.

"She will lose by inferior education—she will pay by loss of teaching facilities, and worse still, she will pay by loss of prestige.

"Now is the time to realise your assets. I hold in my hand a copy of the net Revenue Account of the G.N.C. for 1933. It is amazing, magnificent. The Examiners' Fees alone amount to £24,000. No wonder other professions are anxious to participate in its expenditure. I want you to realise that you are the source of this wealth.

"The majority of the group who propose you should distribute largesse, subscribes not a penny to your funds—

indeed, I have heard it disputed that you have any interest whatever in the expenditure of the enormous income you provide. Cease to take this arrogant assumption with patience, and prove by an earnest and conscientious interest in the conduct of your professional affairs by the General Nursing Council, that you will not submit to a snatch vote upon the part of unprofessional nominees, where not only the interests of professional education and organisation are concerned, but your responsible status in the body politic. If the worst comes to the worst, appeal over the heads of this meagre majority to Parliament—your Act provides redress, use it."

Mrs. Fenwick's speech was received with enthusiastic applause.

Discussion.

The Chairman invited discussion, in which several ladies present took part. Miss Nelson, R.N., Sister Tutor, asked the following questions:

1. "What power have we registered nurses to veto any change of policy passed by the General Nursing Council?"

To which the Chairman replied:—

"No fundamental change can be made in the Statutory Rules interpreting the Act without the approval of the Minister of Health and Parliament.

"Every Registered Nurse has a vote, she can instruct and appeal to her member of Parliament, and combine with her colleagues to oppose what she considers to be injurious legislation."

2. "How does the fact that the Scottish Nurses' Council has accepted the scheme of splitting the Preliminary State Examination affect us—from the reciprocal registration point of view?"

To which the reply was given:

"As the Nurses' Registration Acts provide for reciprocity of registration between England and Scotland, unfortunately the Scottish nurses will have the right to register in England for the usual half-fee, although the General Nursing Council for England does not approve of their new method of preliminary training and examination, this comes of a quiescent attitude upon the part of the nurse electorate in Scotland."

The One Portal to the Register.

Before closing the Meeting, the Chairman urged all those present—who were evidently warmly in sympathy with the policy of the speakers—to one and all do their individual part to maintain the policy of the One Portal to the State Register.

Leaflets on sale were eagerly bought by the audience, who expressed deep interest in the question so vital to the future welfare of nursing education.

PASSING BELL.

We regret to note that Miss F. M. Plant, matron of the Dar-es-Salaam European Hospital, has died at Guy's Hospital. She went out to Zanzibar and German East Africa 30 years ago in the nursing service of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, and on the outbreak of war was taken prisoner by the Germans.

Together with other mission nurses she was brought to the notorious prisoner-of-war camp in Tabora, where by her self-sacrificing care for Allied prisoners, by her cheerfulness in depressing circumstances, and by her refusal to be browbeaten by the German guards, some of whom took a special delight in annoying and threatening her, she speedily won the admiration and affection of the whole camp.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)