

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not IN ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF GREAT BRITAIN.

Murray House,
Vandon Street,
Buckingham Gate, S.W.1.
27th November, 1933.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING,
39, Portland Place, W.1.

TRAINING OF NURSES.

DEAR MADAM.—I shall be much obliged if you can find space to include the enclosed letter from Mrs. Keynes in your next issue as it deals with the various points which have been raised in connection with the resolution on the Training of Nurses which was passed at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Women at Torquay.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) M. NUNBURNHOLME, President.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF GREAT BRITAIN.

Murray House,
Vandon Street,
Buckingham Gate, S.W.1.
29th November, 1933.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM.—My name has been mentioned so frequently in your JOURNAL in connection with the resolution on the Training of Nurses passed by the National Council of Women in Annual Council at Torquay in October last that I must ask leave to make one or two observations on the subject in your columns.

According to the Report of the British College of Nurses held on October 21st, the President charged the National Council of Women with "attempting to supersede the statutory authority of the General Nursing Council of England and Wales," and the Council thereupon "unanimously deplored the disastrous effect of such uninstructed interference in the educational curriculum of the Nursing Profession."

I do not understand how any resolution passed by the National Council of Women—although by no means "uninstructed"—could supersede a statutory authority. The Council, in adopting the resolution, was merely asking the General Nursing Council to make a certain alteration in the rules for its qualifying examinations. As members of the National Council of Women, we claim that we are entitled to express our views upon the terms of entry into any occupation in which women are engaged.

We recognise the great service done by the British College of Nurses and its President in working for the State Registration of Nurses, but circumstances have changed since the Act of 1919. The educational world has not stood still. If the science teaching in Girls' Schools had then been as fully developed as at the present time it is possible that the Rules framed under the Act might have taken a different form. The medical profession has long abandoned the idea that medical students must be taught their scientific subjects by doctors, and it is difficult to see why student nurses should be taught science by nurses.

The British College of Nurses appears now to approve of pre-hospital training for nurses, and the only point of difference between us is, therefore, the stage at which

students may take the science papers of the Preliminary State Examination. We are not proposing that it should be possible to take the whole of the Preliminary before entering a Training School, nor that any part should be compulsory before admission, but that by dividing the examination it should be possible for candidates to take the theoretical part before leaving school. This proposal had already received much support, not only from the Lancet Commission and the National Council of Women, but also from the Nursing Profession itself and the General Nursing Council for Scotland.

With regard to the presence of the Resolution on the Agenda for the Council at Torquay, it can hardly be necessary to remind the British College of Nurses that under the democratic constitution of the National Council of Women the Executive Committee has no control over the resolutions sent forward by Branches or Affiliated Societies, and in the case of the Nursing Resolution, the Cambridge Branch is alone responsible. All the resolutions were, however, circulated to all Branches and Societies by the Office three times before they were discussed by the Council.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) F. A. KEYNES.

ANNOTATION TO LETTER BY MRS. KEYNES.

[Mrs. Keynes states that she cannot understand how the National Council of Women by their resolution on the Training of Nurses, passed in Annual Council at Torquay, attempted to supersede the statutory authority of the General Nursing Council. We beg, therefore, to refer her to Dr. Johnson's Dictionary, where she will find the word "supersede" defined to mean "to make void or inefficacious," "to set aside." If the National Council of Women were not endeavouring to do this in relation to the first part of the Preliminary Examination established by the General Nursing Council, then it appears to us that words have no meaning.

Mrs. Keynes claims that the National Council of Women were "by no means uninstructed" as to this question. By whom were they instructed? Not by the General Nursing Council, nor by the British College of Nurses, the Matrons' Council, or other associations of nurses affiliated to the National Council of Women, whom courtesy demanded should have been consulted on this expert subject, and we desire to emphasise our statement that the National Council of Women would not venture to interfere with the educational curriculum of other statutory professions for women in the inconsiderate manner in which they have done with the Profession of Nursing.

In reference to the statement that "the medical profession has long abandoned the idea that medical students must be taught their scientific subjects by doctors," we beg to refer Mrs. Keynes to the important Memorandum presented from Leeds to the General Nursing Council on the Preliminary Education of Nurses, by distinguished signatories, all of whom have been engaged in various aspects of the training of nurses. This Memorandum states that the proposal to relegate the teaching of Anatomy, Physiology and Elementary Hygiene, leading up to Part I of the State Examination, to the school period is "an attempt to 'lighten the curriculum' by relegating some of the work to a preliminary 'school' stage. It cannot be too strongly pointed out that this method has not succeeded in medicine, and in that profession there is no attempt made to thrust back *fundamental* subjects like Anatomy and Physiology, but only those which have become the normal content of a general education. The object of pushing out the preliminary sciences was to give more time for Anatomy and Physiology in relation to clinical work."

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