

One of the primary rules of most Student Groups is that they report themselves to their class representative, monitor or president if they break any house rules such as over-staying leave, etc. (rather than the old method of hoping not to be found out and being punished if found out). To the young woman of integrity this new method appeals, but there are always some who like to evade regulations or who cannot accept with good grace punishments meted out by the Student Council.

The Student Council (executive and class representatives) should meet regularly to deal with organisation business—these meetings are usually held monthly. Mass meetings may be arranged at intervals—quarterly or at call of Council.

The Council at its monthly meetings (or at special sub-committee meetings held at more frequent intervals) deals with misdemeanours. The jurisdiction of the Student Council is exclusively in connection with residence and social life and has no authority or permission to discuss either at Council or mass meetings matters pertaining to educational policy, "on duty" regulations, or anything other than strictly home life. Sometimes a student or group of students will present a suggestion or request which is outside their sphere and this requires prompt handling and is one of the reasons why it is wise for a member of the Training School Staff or Faculty to be present. It is merely a matter of wise guidance as an incident of this kind sometimes happens when there is a new executive, the members of which are not quite sure how to handle it. There is also the definitely critical individual or group who might get "out of bounds" if not guided, but they would do so whether Student Government was in effect or not. It is the present speaker's experience that the majority of students do not support any semblance to "trouble making."

The mass meetings also give the Matron or Director of the School an opportunity of clearing any doubt of this kind in an impersonal way. Should a subject be presented over which the students have no control, an explanation can be made showing the hospital's attitude or the Board of Directors' or Matron's point of view and thus giving them one's confidence. This often "clears the air."

On the whole, and there are a sufficient number of Training Schools with long experience of Student Government to justify forming definite opinions, the advantages outweigh any weaknesses of this system. The erratic hours of student nurses, difficulty in members of the Council arranging meetings at an hour suitable to all, are a few of the reasons that make organisation difficult. It is found in most hospitals more satisfactory to have the compulsory attendance at Council meetings and mass meetings of all except those who cannot be relieved from duty. Council meetings must be compulsory if the organisation is to function satisfactorily and head nurses (sisters) should so arrange in planning the members' "off duty" time and ward schedule.

In the "Suggested Revised Curriculum" of the country the speaker represents, the following brief outline is given under *Student Organisation*:—

"There are two general types of student organisation in schools of nursing in Canada—

"1. A staff governing body in which students have no representation.

"2. A co-operative government in which the staff is represented on the student council, and in which students and staff co-operate in formulating policies. This form of government, in which students and staff participate, seems to be considered the more satisfactory.

"The institution of student government should afford the students the opportunity of sharing in the management of affairs that have to do with their life in residence. Its main object is to increase a sense of responsibility for their

own actions and to give them a type of training which should be valuable in making impersonal decisions in relation to many other situations which will occur in their social and professional life. While the general objectives of student government should be the same in all schools, the type of organisation and policy of discipline would naturally vary to suit local needs.

*Cultural and social development.*

"Cultural and social development are very important factors in the life of any student, and it is generally agreed that this element of education should receive more attention in schools of nursing. Reference has already been made to the position of the social director and of the importance of securing a well qualified person for this particular position.

"The following activities are suggested in connection with recreational and social opportunities: Tennis, badminton, swimming, basketball, reading or study club in relation to history or literature, debating, dramatics, music, current events, handicrafts and other creative opportunities."

In this treatise also there is a discussion of the position of the Social Director. Under the heading of "Status and Responsibility" it recommends that:—

"The social director should be responsible for the organisation and function of social activities in the school. She should encourage the students to participate in social events. Students with special artistic talents should continue their interest and practice in these cultural activities."

And "Qualifications and Relationships":—

"The social director, because of the nature of her position, should have a fairly close contact with the students. It is only by knowing them and mixing with them socially that she can best become familiar with their cultural tastes and abilities. It should be her responsibility to make the life in residence as happy and as normal an environment as is possible. It would be an advantage if she were also qualified in physical education in order that she might conduct the physical education programme."

It will be seen, therefore, that more consideration is being given to any scheme that will ensure a life as nearly approaching the "normal" as possible, and a realisation that students of the ages of 19-25 should be given every opportunity to think for themselves. Student Government is one method that gives very definite opportunity for such development.

In discussing this phase with a group of student nurses recently they expressed themselves as:—

1. Enjoying the privileges of Student Government.

2. Appreciating the opportunities for group discussion, and being particularly impressed at the commencement of their course by the reasonable freedom in the home life and of the fact that there was a student organisation functioning.

3. Conscious of its value as a preparation for alumnae and other nursing organisation responsibilities.

4. On the whole ready to accept more willingly the regulations imposed by their Council than if emanating from the Faculty.

5. When acting either on executive or committees, developing a sense of responsibility and appreciating the need of regulations when the hospital's problems and needs are discussed in conference.

6. Enjoying this channel of impersonal approach to hospital authorities, whether it is to ask for privileges or air grievances.

The speaker is not conversant with organisations in other countries, but understands that in two London hospitals there is a "Nurses' Council" with representation from each undergraduate year as well as from the staff.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)