

The Guild was working for shorter hours, and the present time with the election of a new General Nursing Council afforded trained nurses an opportunity to support those who would support their views. The College of Nursing instructed nurses for whom they wanted them to vote, but if they wanted to get rid of grievances they must organise themselves. The members of the College were actuated by extreme snobbery. The Bill prepared by the Guild of Nurses, which incorporated the demand for shorter hours of duty in hospitals and institutions, would be presented for discussion in the House of Commons on December 3rd. She invited all present to join and work for the Guild.

Mr. George Gibson, Chairman of the National Advisory Committee for the Nursing Profession (T.U.C.), said that thirty years ago mental nurses were organised in the Asylum Workers' Union, but they were organised under the medical superintendents. After affirming that the voluntary system of hospital management must pass, the speaker pointed out that it took three years to train a nurse, and more if they took up other branches, but there was little prospect for them subsequently or provision for superannuation. He suggested that it was time that nurses started managing their own affairs. He invited those present to join the Guild of Nurses and take advantage of the protection it would give them.

Mrs. Iris Brook, S.R.N., speaking as a trained nurse, said that all were agreed there was an acute shortage in the Nursing Profession. Hospitals in the provinces were unable to obtain sufficient nurses. Nurses were told they must not strike, but it was the young women outside the profession who had struck. They would not come into it.

Points to which Mrs. Brook drew attention were: (1) That at the end of their training nurses frequently had little opportunity of promotion; (2) that they believed the position of the trained nurse should be stabilised; (3) they claimed the right of the trained nurse to be non-resident if she wished; they also wished for more post-graduate courses for trained nurses. Mrs. Brook mentioned that she was a candidate for election on the General Nursing Council in the forthcoming election, and asked for the votes of those present. She mentioned that the Guild of Nurses had no strike clause in its Constitution, as was often erroneously asserted. It was the young women outside the Nursing Profession who had gone on strike; they would not come into it.

She would like, she said, to pay one tribute, namely to the work accomplished by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, a woman of great courage (applause), for the Nursing Profession. Ten years ago Mrs. Fenwick had started the British College of Nurses. She suggested that the College should join the Guild. Then the College could look after the educational side of nurses' work, and the Guild after economics.

Mrs. Brook concluded by asking those present to join the Guild of Nurses and "join to-night."

A nurse present informed the Chairman that Mrs. Bedford Fenwick was in the Hall and spoke of her life-long services to the nursing profession, upon which the Chairman in his genial way proposed that a hearty vote of thanks should be accorded to her, which was done.

Mrs. Fenwick in returning thanks said that her work for the State Registration of Nurses, would, she hoped, be of lasting value, as through the Nurses' Registration Acts, nurses had attained legal status.

Mr. A. M. Wall, Secretary of the London Trades Council, said he felt he was addressing the converted, those who believed in Trades Unionism, but they were going to meet to-morrow many who did not. He pointed out that Trades Unionism for nurses was a perfectly legal combination. For many years Trades Unionism was illegal, then in 1875 men won the right of combination.

There was combination in industry and in commerce.

There was a great difference between nurses who were in industry and others who were in commerce.

There was no profession in the world outside the need for organisation. Doctors were organised. Did those present know why doctors did not strike? It was because they were proof against blacklegs.

Trades Unionism applied equally to nurses. He spoke of the British Equity Society, and instanced the organisation of actors. He appealed to his hearers never to let their profession down in the face of anyone, and claimed that the keenest people to-day were professional people who in this country had the heritage of voluntary self government.

He appealed to the nurses of Britain to organise not for self alone, but because it would be for the benefit of their patients.

They should secure a 100 per cent. organisation. Then they could set up a joint Council. The National Council would then set up a professional code and a fair wages clause. To this every hospital would be obliged to conform or it would get no nurses.

Concluding the speaker said: We shall organise nurses and we shall make their organisation a professional organisation.

The following three resolutions were then moved and carried, the first two with a few dissentients, the third *nem con.*

Resolution I.—That this meeting of nurses wholeheartedly supports the Charter contained in the booklet "Off-duty," prepared by the Trades Union Congress, and desires to place on record appreciation for the action taken. The meeting further urges all nurses to implement the work already commenced by joining the "Guild of Nurses," and furthering its objects in every possible way.

Resolution II.—That this meeting of nurses enthusiastically supports the Limitation of Hours of Duty in Hospitals and Institutions Bill, to be presented to the House of Commons on December 3rd, 1937, and urges that full support be given to the provisions thereof. Further that the Government be asked to give facilities for the successful passage of the Bill through the House.

Resolution III.—That this meeting of nurses expresses profound disappointment in the constitution of the Inter-departmental Committee on the Nursing Profession. Of twenty-one members of the Committee, only one is a working nurse. The meeting requests that immediate representation be made to the Minister of Health asking for the Committee to be strengthened by the appointment thereon of five additional working nurses, to include a probationer nurse and a male nurse.

With thanks to the Chairman, the meeting then concluded.

APPEAL FOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.

We quote the following paragraph from *The Times*, as it makes clear that negotiation on a collective basis is the basic principle upon which Trades Unionism proposes to organise the profession of nursing.

"The Association of Nurses formed 'to improve the status of our profession,' has issued a pamphlet which deals with the problem of the lack of nurses and entrants to the profession and suggests a remedy.

"'Nurses are not being attracted to the profession,' the pamphlet states, 'because of long hours, unnecessary restrictions, low salaries, and other conditions of work which can be put right only when a professional organisation is able to negotiate effectively on their behalf. . . . All the members of the executive council (of the association) are nurses and know the particular needs of their colleagues.

"Negotiation on a collective basis—the primary aim of the association—did not mean that two sides faced each other in a spirit of hostility. It stood essentially for machinery to eliminate the grievances which militated against complete efficiency."

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