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EDITORIAL.

WHAT OF 1938?

Once again, as we enter upon the New Year, we review its possibilities, and always there is the thrill of entering upon the unknown, the wonder of what the New Year holds for us—of joy and sorrow, of possibilities of new endeavours, of consolidating what we have already achieved, of making new ground and taking further steps forward.

To nurses who are planning a year of increased usefulness to their patients and their profession we would urge that they can no longer stand aloof from civic duties; that these, indeed, are found to be closely associated with their professional duties; that it is impossible to perform the latter aright if we neglect the former, and that it is essential that we take up our position as citizens and study to make ourselves efficient and useful members of society in our motherland.

Nurses as a class have hitherto not taken the active part in public affairs which the importance of their position would lead one to expect. 1938 should find them taking a keen interest and broad outlook in social evolution in all directions in which it comes into contact with their public and professional duty.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES OF GREAT BRITAIN.

To take a concrete instance, the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain is the organisation in this country which represents Britain's Nurses to the world through affiliation with the International Council of Nurses. It holds a dignified and recognised position, gathering within its borders some 47,000 certificated nurses, and its pronouncements, based as they are on a free electorate, are received with respect. It last year gave evidence of its forcefulness and potentialities by organising and acting as the hostess to the nurses of the world, affiliated in 32 countries, most of which were represented when, as members of the International Council of Nurses, they attended the Eighth Quadrennial Congress held in London last July, the success and far-reaching effects of which have received worldwide recognition.

Here, then, is one objective which we can determine to further during 1938: to take a real interest in the International Council of Nurses, watch with sympathy the evolution of its many activities, and help to strengthen its weak links. Here is an objective which trained nurses throughout the world can unite to promote. And the channels through which this can be done have a worldwide basis which should appeal to us all, giving liberty of action in detail, combined with

a common purpose, explicitly to advance the best good of our profession by greater unity of thought, sympathy and purpose. To endeavour to further this purpose should be the happiness of every member of the International—it implies painstaking study of the conditions and aspirations of nurses in other countries if we are to attain this primary object of the International Council. It means, further, study of the history of many countries in order that the inspiration of the nationalities to which the nurses belong may be rightly and sympathetically understood.

CITIZENSHIP TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

Further, it is imperative that we should take an interest in legislation and our position as citizens seriously.

Our professional work is a great national asset, it affects all classes of the community. It therefore follows that all classes of the community claim the power to control its economic status in so far as each is concerned. It follows that without organisation and the exercise of civil and political powers the members of the Nursing profession are in constant danger of economic pressure and depression. Two concrete instances in recent legislation spring to mind: (1) The Midwives Act of 1936, and the substitution of the Central Midwives Board for the General Nursing Council in the education and control of maternity nurses; and (2) the appointment of an Inter-departmental Committee on Nursing Services, composed of some 21 persons, with few exceptions lay and medical practitioners, on which the national organisations of Registered Nurses, with the exception of the General Nursing Council, have been determinedly refused representation by Ministers of the Crown. A humiliating position indeed for all concerned.

Registered by the State we may be, but legal status granted by Parliament is thus determinedly ignored by its administrators.

For this futile position in the body politic we are ourselves to blame. Alas! the majority of our inspired and great-hearted leaders have passed on—but there are still those in our ranks who have courage and devotion to professional ideals. Let them stand forth with singleness of purpose and make it impossible that Rules, Regulations and Laws shall be thrust upon us without our consent.

Let 1938 find the Old Guard and their young recruits vigilant in the protection of professional self-determination and so make it possible for us to attain high standards of public health, and the tender and sufficient care of the sick.

This we can never do under duress.

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