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EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK REGISTERED NURSE.

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EDITORIAL.

A GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL FOR S. AFRICA.

It was in 1888 that a medical member of the *Lancet* staff put forward our suggestion that a General Nursing Council should be formed for the better organisation of trained Nurses, and it was not until 30 years later that the suggestion was included in the scope of the Nurses' Registration Acts of 1919, which incorporated the demand for a Council based on a free electorate of Registered Nurses together with a minority of persons nominated by the Privy Council and certain Government Departments, a constitution which, failing a purely professional Council, gives general satisfaction.

The fact that the Registered Nurses entirely finance the Council places them in a dignified and indisputable position of authority should occasion arise.

It was with sincere interest therefore that we read the Editorial in February's issue of the *South African Nursing Journal*, headed "A General Nursing Council for South Africa" in which the following justifiable claims are advanced:—

"In view of the fact that a Parliamentary General Election is imminent, it is opportune to consider on what matters nurses as voters desire assurance from candidates for election.

"First and foremost, nurses require adequate representation on the statutory body responsible for the control of the nursing profession, in:—

"The curriculum and syllabus of training for general nurses, midwives and mental nurses;

"Period and nature of training;

"Standard of education (scholastic and professional);

"Age limits;

"Recognition of Training Schools and Inspection thereof;

"Examination and Registration;

"And for the regulation of practice, etc.

"Ten years ago, the Medical, Dental and Pharmacy Act was passed, under which the South African Medical Council was constituted, merging the Medical Councils of the different Provinces into one National Council. Under the Act, for the first time nurses achieved direct representation on the governing body, in the proportion of 2, out of 25 doctors, dentists and laymen.

"On the Nursing Committee of the Medical Council the representation of nurses stands at 2 out of 10.

"Under the Act no nurse may vote on any but nursing matters which come before the Medical Council; but the whole Council may vote on any nursing matter.

"Nurses need no reminding that the profession of nursing is modern; it was created by women nurses, built up by women; all developments in the field of

nursing have been achieved by nurses; and, whilst nurses fully appreciate the value of control of the profession by a statutory body, they claim that they are entitled to proper representation on the Statutory Body appointed, and that the members appointed by Government or other bodies should be selected on grounds similar to those in the Nurses' Registration Act of England and Wales.

"Nursing is not a sub-department of medicine, justifiably placed under the control of medical practitioners. It is an art and a science, complementary to the medical profession, having its own field of teaching and training. Techniques and procedures, skills and aptitudes are taught and developed by nurse teachers.

"It is fit and right that those practising and those teaching the art of nursing should be responsible for the preponderating vote on all matters affecting their direction.

"Further, nurses wish to make it clear that they are not content to be governed *in the practice of their profession* by a body the majority of which is elected by other professions and elected *in the interests* of those other professions, and not of nursing.

"In addition, they hold that the registrar appointed to deal with nursing matters should be a trained and registered nurse, holding at least the certificate of Medical and Surgical Nursing.

"The relevant clauses of the Nurses' Registration Act of 1919, for England and Wales, are attached for comparison with the relevant sections of the Medical, Dental and Pharmacy Act 15 of 1928."

ECONOMIC SELF DETERMINATION.

In the long struggle with reactionary Nursing Schools and their Medical Staffs and Matrons between the years 1887 and 1919—when at last Acts for the Registration of Nurses became law in England, Scotland and Ireland, the struggle focussed on the right for a woman's profession to govern itself as men's professions do—and we were thankful for the considerable power with which the Registered Nurses were entrusted; sixteen nurses' representatives to nine nominated unprofessional persons—thus the Registered Nurses could control their own destiny if they worked loyally together. Alas! such professional loyalty has not always been apparent, and where powerful outside influence and pressure, through the press and otherwise has been exercised, expediency has on more than one occasion prevailed. The ultimate aim of every body of professional persons should be economic self-determination.

We wish our colleagues in South Africa success in their campaign for a just measure of self government in their own profession.

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