

AN INEXCUSABLE ATTACK.

We have received the following inexcusable communication from Miss Olive Baggallay, Secretary of the Florence Nightingale International Foundation, and an official delegate of the College of Nursing on the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain. Its personal attack upon the Editor of this JOURNAL, and the intemperate and inaccurate statements in reference to the policy and accomplishments of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain, of which she is Founder and President, demand refutation:—

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

55, Ridgway Place,
Wimbledon, S.W.19.

February 19th, 1938.

DEAR EDITOR,—As a regular reader of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, which is the official organ of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain, I am astonished and indignant to read in the February issue several most uncalled for and misleading references to the College of Nursing, the largest and most representative of the nurses' associations affiliated to that National Council. Surely the most elementary standard of loyalty would demand that the organ of the National Council should not use its columns to vilify one of its own members.

You refer on page 46 to a discussion of the London Branch of the College of Nursing at which I spoke on the advisability of strengthening the representation of all Registered Nurses through the National Council of Nurses. I should like you and your readers to know that I qualified this statement by saying that the National Council, in my opinion, was not functioning as representative of Nursing opinion and could not function as such under its present management.

You take pains to outline on pages 47 and 48 the opinion expressed recently in *Time and Tide* on the failure of the College of Nursing to attain the conditions of employment it would like to see universally offered to nurses. You do not show how the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain has been any more successful, nor do you tell your readers that much of the pioneer work being done by the College is being hindered by the obvious lack of co-operation of other nurses' associations in this work.

You are careful to publish at length on page 41 an account by an individual student nurse, of unfair pressure to join the Student Nurses' Association. You have been misinformed there on one small point: the members of this association are not "automatically" made members of the College on obtaining their State Registration. There is the small matter of subscription and entrance fee to be considered, a serious problem to the young nurse. If so misinformed on such an elementary point, was not your young friend a somewhat "unreliable witness"?

Incidentally, I should be obliged if you would inform me to whom you refer when you say that the Council of the College "consists mainly of hospital Governors, Matrons and Doctors." I suggest that you have been incorrectly informed as to the proportion of doctors and hospital governors on that Council.

Again, you say on page 45 that the "College of Nursing . . . have been given representation on the Inter-Departmental Committee on Nursing." Apparently your only evidence to support this statement is that all the nurse members of the Committee are members of the College. You do not accept a statement made by the Secretary of the College, who has obviously a right to speak on this point. Possibly you have overlooked the fact that in speaking of a "representative" one usually infers that such a person is

appointed to "represent" the opinions of the body nominating her. This leads me back to my original point. Can the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain appoint any one nurse who could "represent" its opinion? Has it an opinion? I have attended its annual meetings regularly for five years now, but never have I obtained an impression that any matter of importance to our profession has there been discussed, nor that there is machinery provided for such discussion.

The Nursing profession is in a stage of rapid development. The public are becoming aware of their dependence on our services. The opportunity for the concerted action of nurses is ripe. We have had, since 1904, a National Council of Nurses with every opportunity for organised and democratic leadership; yet it has entirely failed to unite the profession. Its influence appears to have been destructive rather than constructive. Surely the time has come when out of our common interests we might make a common cause instead of using the power that nurses have given us to oppose and crush all constructive effort for reform.

Yours truly,

OLIVE BAGGALLAY.

We deny that any uncalled for or misleading references to the College of Nursing were inserted in the February issue of this JOURNAL, or that its columns have been used to "vilify" it as one of the associations affiliated to the National Council of Nurses.

We quoted on page 46 the discussion arising, and published in the *News Sheet*, the organ of the London Branch of the College of Nursing, on its proposal which has been under consideration for some time, the Draft Scheme for the affiliation of Associations of Nurses (whose names appear upon the Supplementary Parts of the Register) to the College of Nursing, a form of organisation already included in the Constitution of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain which has worked admirably and in perfect harmony for some time. Why therefore should the College of Nursing attempt to adopt in this particular the Constitution of the National Council?

Miss Baggallay's opinion "that the National Council was not functioning as representative of Nursing opinion and could not function as such under its present management" remains unsupported by any evidence advanced by her concerning support of this statement.

The National Council functions strictly according to its Constitution, which is based on a liberal elective system, and any form of coercion, dictation, or manipulation is antagonistic to its ethical standards. It is the duty of an accredited professional organ of any community of persons to give publicity to events and expressions of public opinion on their affairs. Thus the correspondence in *Time and Tide* on "Do Nurses Get a Square Deal?" was quoted in brief from the three points of view presented, the Trades Union, College of Nursing, and Medical. That the Editor of *Time and Tide* summed up against the College of Nursing's claims was no reason for suppressing her opinion. It is salutary to see ourselves as others see us.

Miss Baggallay, in accusing "other Nursing Associations" of obstructing the work of the College of Nursing, fails to convince. Is it not rather that the College of Nursing is somewhat intolerant of the liberty of opinion and action of the pioneer associations of nurses founded on self-determination? and that its policy of absorption

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