

FREE EXPRESSION OF OPINION IN THE PRESS.

We make no excuse for devoting so much space in this issue to the controversy which has naturally arisen on the proposals of the Royal College of Nursing to de-grade nursing standards as at present provided for under the Nurses' Registration Acts, 1919, administered by the General Nursing Councils for England and Wales and for Scotland.

In the past during the 30 years' struggle with the Nursing Schools for efficient nursing standards and State Registration of Nurses, the promoters of reform were met by an almost unanimously antagonistic Press, inspired by the interested and powerful opposition.

It is with all the more appreciation, therefore, that we record our gratitude to the *Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post* for its liberal policy in inserting letters in support of the free nurses' point of view on the "Conditions of Nursing" as they exist, and as it is proposed by Lord Horder's Committee that they shall be de-graded, which Committee demands that instead of one basis of efficiency—three Registers or Rolls shall be legalised, the compilation of which would not only confuse the public, but inevitably constitute complete economic confusion in nursing ranks.

Under the heading "Nursing Conditions," the following letters have recently appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* :—

NURSING CONDITIONS.

To the Editor of "The Daily Telegraph."

SIR,—Last week you published the information that the Nursing Reconstruction Committee under the chairmanship of Lord Horder advocated a closed profession for nurses. May I point out one or two facts with reference to this news?

This committee is not a Government-sponsored committee. It came into being on the invitation of the Council of the Royal College of Nursing, and is composed largely of employers of nurses. The College is not the governing body of the profession, but one organisation of nurses among others.

The governing body is the General Nursing Council for England and Wales. It may approve schools of nursing, courses of lectures, conduct State examinations, and compile a register of nurses. It protects the status of registered nurses, and it may punish offenders and remove their names from the register in certain circumstances; and, in general, it works for the benefit and protection of the sick public.

Thus the conclusions of an unofficial committee should not be accepted as the views of the whole nursing profession. Many registered nurses are now serving their country and cannot attend to nursing politics. No steps should be taken, therefore, in the opinion of other nursing organisations, which might prove derogatory to the protection of their hard-won qualifications, or to their economic position.

Yours faithfully,

GLADYS M. HARDY,

S.R.N. Diploma of Nursing (London University).
London, S.W. 11.

Miss Frances G. Goodall, S.R.N., General Secretary, Royal College of Nursing, replied to the above letter as follows on September 23rd.

To the Editor of "The Daily Telegraph."

SIR,—Miss Gladys Hardy asks that nothing be done to implement the recommendations of the Nursing Reconstruction Committee with regard to the assistant nurse, as

- (i) The committee is composed largely of employers of nurses;
- (ii) The conclusions of one organisation should not be accepted as the views of the whole nursing profession;
- (iii) The recommendations might prove derogatory to the protection of the nurse's hard-won qualifications or to her economic position.

In reply may I point out, first, that in formulating recommendations which will affect a wide variety of people it is customary to-day, to consult interested parties, the Government Salaries Committees for nurses and midwives being a case in point?

Secondly, though the Royal College of Nursing is by far the largest association of trained nurses in the country, the other nurses' organisations were invited to appoint representatives on the committee.

Thirdly, it is just because of the chaotic situation in which the nursing profession found itself after the last war that steps are being taken now to plan for a more orderly future. That, surely, is the essence of reconstruction.

Yours faithfully,

FRANCES G. GOODALL,
General Secretary.

Royal College of Nursing, W.1.

This expression of opinion was very ably criticised by Miss Isabel Macdonald, S.R.N., Secretary, Royal British Nurses' Association, as follows on September 29th :—

To the Editor of "The Daily Telegraph."

SIR,—The recent plea that, while so many Registered Nurses are strenuously engaged in the service of their country at home and abroad no steps should be taken that might react adversely upon their professional security, ought to receive sympathetic consideration.

The Nursing Reconstruction Committee of the Royal College of Nursing has inaugurated a policy pregnant with danger alike to the sick and to the nurses, when it advocates recognition by the State of those nurses who have failed to meet the minimum standards of training and professional education set up under the General Nursing Council.

To set the seal of the State's approval upon the Assistant Nurse by placing her on a roll, to be maintained by the Council, would confuse the public in the first place; the latter, like most of our dictionaries, regard the words roll and register as analogous. In the assumption that those partially qualified nurses would receive a lower rate of remuneration than the Registered Nurses lies menace of the worst form of economic competition that can assail any profession.

It is to be noted that, since the Nurses' Registration Act was established, the Registered Nurses have paid nearly £1,000,000 for its administration and, if certain recommendations of the Committee be adopted, it is undoubted that many nurses will return to feel that they have been cruelly injured in a professional sense.

I am, etc.,

ISABEL MACDONALD,
Secretary,
Royal British Nurses' Association.

London, S.W.7.

Miss Gladys Hardy very appropriately emphasises the facts that (1) the Nursing Reconstruction Committee of the Royal College of Nursing is not sponsored

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