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EDITORIAL.

"OUR" CHILDREN IN DANGER.

"Our" children, in the present instance, alludes to the children in the schools controlled by the London County Council. We call them ours because we tax and rate-payers, subscribe the cash which provides the amenities for their education and the supervision of their health during compulsory attendance at school; and because, in these days, there are no children in the world superior to our London children in behaviour, wit and beauty, and whose health is a sacred charge.

Those of us who remember the waifs and strays to be met in the slums and streets of the metropolis seventy years ago, have watched the gradual improvement in their condition as the years have passed away with thanksgiving, and have been proud to know that the personal contact of highly trained and sympathetic nurses, members of the School Nursing Service of the London County Council, have exercised a most beneficent influence in detecting symptoms of disease, usually the result of insufficient and unsuitable food, of dirt, and lack of morality, and by their expert methods helping to restore such children to health and happiness.

It is now many years since the late Miss Helen Pearse, S.R.N., was appointed Superintendent of the School Nursing Service of the London County Council, whose work in the organisation and supervision of this important national service can never be over-estimated. A courageous and very sympathetic woman, she exercised a vast power for good as an example to the staff which she controlled, and when in touch with irate parents who resented home truths where the physical condition of their progeny was concerned.

So increasingly valuable as an agent in the standard of health of London's school children has the School Nursing Service become, that it gave us a nasty jar to learn that those persons now in power on the Education Committee of the L.C.C. have actually devised a scheme for decreasing the highly qualified staff of Registered Nurses and appointing in their stead at a cheaper rate of pay semi-trained Assistant Nurses, thus not only endangering the health of "our" children, but delivering a crashing economic blow at the whole School Nursing Service.

We know that the majority of Registered Nurses have little economic independence, because few have private means, so the offer of a valiant School Sister to resign as a protest against the proposed de-grading of the service pleased us vastly. But we pointed out

that a drop in the ocean has little influence on its tides, and that a better plan would be, if possible, to unite with colleagues and courageously draft and submit considered objections to those in authority, and if redress was refused, future action should include publicity and an appeal to ratepayers through the Press.

If the callous proposition of the London County Council is made public—that the health of London's children should be at the mercy of socially ignorant semi-trained women, to be substituted because they are cheaper than highly trained Registered Nurses, the latter to be compulsorily associated with them—public opinion will condemn severely those persons responsible for this reactionary and heartless policy.

THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL STAFF ASSOCIATION TAKE ACTION.

We rejoice, therefore, to learn that the London County Council Staff Association is taking considered action, and has communicated its objections to the reactionary and dangerous policy of the Education Committee to Dr. W. Allen Daley, Medical Officer of Health to the L.C.C., who apparently approves of the employment of women without professional qualifications in the School Nursing Service, to the General Nursing Council, and to certain organisations of nurses, notably to the Royal College of Nursing, which is primarily responsible for the proposed de-grading of the Nursing Profession and its consequent economic demoralisation.

The case of the School Nursing Service of the London County Council is typical of the inevitable demoralisation of the Profession of Nursing, should the short-term semi-trained Assistant Nurse be given legal status by any form of registration by Parliament as advocated by the Royal College of Nursing—deprived of spirit, energy, and self-respect, our beloved profession, as we know it to-day, will be no more.

But let us fight to a finish against the powers of ignorance, monopoly, and inhumanity. Remember "our" children are in danger.

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET UP £167,586.

The Education Committee of the London County Council have budgeted for expenditure of £12,405,296 for 1943-44, an increase of £167,586, to meet salaries and wages increases and to provide more playing fields.

With such huge expenditure there would appear to be no reason to penalise the School Nursing Sisters.

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