

In justice to Registered Nurses, the Council decided to take the following action:—

(1) To send an explanatory letter to the Right Hon. Winston Spencer Churchill, Prime Minister, and First Lord of the Treasury, pointing out its strong objection to the autocratic policy—so far as the Nursing Profession was concerned—of the Ministers of Health and Labour, which policy proposed to govern a large section of the community—the Registered Nurses—without consultation, and without their knowledge or consent.

It was also agreed to communicate with the Minister of Health, Mr. Ernest Brown, and the Chairman of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales.

LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER.

19, Queen's Gate, London, S.W.7.
April 1st, 1943.

To
The Right Honble.
WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL, C.H., M.P.,
Prime Minister,
First Lord of the Treasury and Minister of Defence.

Sir,—At a Special Meeting of the Council of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., held on Saturday, March 27th last, it was decided by Resolution to appeal to you as Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury to extend your protection to such Registered Nurses in England and Wales who strongly resent the bureaucratic control of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Labour, who have drafted and presented a Bill to Parliament under the title of the "Nurses Bill" without consultation with incorporated organisations of Registered Nurses, which provides for the enrolment by Parliament of semi-trained Assistant Nurses, in competition with the highly qualified Registered Nurses, whose training, examination and certification guarantees their efficiency as safe attendants on the sick.

As First Lord, you are probably aware that the Treasury has no financial responsibility whatever for the expenditure of the £50,000 per annum which the administration of the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919, costs, and that in the past 23 years the Registered Nurses have expended a million pounds in financing the administration by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales of the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919, having also erected their own Headquarters, at very considerable cost, at 23, Portland Place, London, W.1, now to be made available in carrying out the provisions of the reactionary legislation proposed by the Minister of Health.

I am also directed to forward for your information a copy of a letter addressed to the Minister of Labour and National Service, who in appointing what he terms a "National Advisory Council for the Recruitment and Distribution of Nurses and Midwives," has refused representation to this incorporated body of Registered Nurses, together with the Royal British Nurses' Association, incorporated by Royal Charter, whilst nominating on to his Council eleven representatives of employers of nurses. We feel sure you will realise that this suppression of individual rights by Ministers of the Crown is contrary to all established precedent of Government in this country, where it is claimed that the people are governed by consent.

May we petition you to sympathise with our claim that whilst the flower of the Nursing Profession is engaged, as it is at home and abroad, in tending with devotion the sick and wounded, a beneficent national duty in this devastating war, that all this contentious legislation should be in abeyance.

To return home from foreign service to find their nursing standards de-graded, and semi-trained nurses enrolled by Parliament in keen economic competition, would be a sorry reward indeed.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Yours faithfully,

ETHEL G. FENWICK,
President.

COPY OF LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE MINISTER OF LABOUR.

19, Queen's Gate, London, S.W.7.
March 30th, 1943.

To
THE RIGHT HON. ERNEST BEVIN, M.P.,
Minister of Labour and National Service,
8, St. James Square, S.W.1.

SIR,—Your letter dated March 24th, 1943, in reply to that sent to you on March 3rd, conveying a copy of the Resolution unanimously adopted by Fellows and Members of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., in General Meeting assembled on February 25th last, was placed before a Special Meeting of our Council on Saturday last, March 27th, 1943, and I was directed to inform you that your determination to exclude from representation on the so-called "National Advisory Council for the Recruitment and Distribution of Nurses and Midwives" of this incorporated and endowed College of Registered Nurses, is in its opinion unjustifiable, as your Council composed of Matrons, and only one organisation of Nurses, to which thousands of Registered Nurses do not belong, can in no sense be recognised as national; and that the representatives of *eleven organisations of employers* to which you have allotted seats violates all sense of equity, when it is realised that these unprofessional people are to take evidence, and to advise as to recruitment and distribution of nurses, and presumably suggest regulations controlling the rights, liberties and service dominating the lives of thousands of professional women without their consent.

Such a proposal emanating from you as Minister of Labour and National Service, becomes the more despotic and intolerable when it is realised that you have recently supported a Bill in Parliament presented by Mr. Ernest Brown, Minister of Health, to provide for the enrolment of Assistant Nurses, that is, for the legal recognition of semi-trained women, whose ignorance may be a serious menace to the public, especially to the sick poor; thus undermining the standards and status of the qualified Registered Nurses whose training and knowledge has been tested, and who have been approved as safe attendants on the sick.

Under these circumstances my Council realises that the excuses offered for our exclusion from representation on the "National Advisory Council for the Recruitment and Distribution of Nurses and Midwives" given by you in your communication of March 4th, "that your aim that each type of nursing interest shall be represented as well as each type of employing body" has not been achieved as far as the Registered Nurses' interests have been considered, as we strongly disapprove (as you know) of the de-grading of nursing standards advocated by the Matrons' Association and by the Royal College of Nursing, the only two bodies of nurses represented on your Council.

Moreover, as enfranchised British subjects, we strongly object to government without representation, we must, therefore, hold ourselves at liberty to refuse to obey the dictates of your Council of employers, should their recommendations clash with our conscientious convictions.

I beg to remain,
Yours faithfully,

ALICE STEWART BRYSON,
Secretary.

LETTER TO MR. ERNEST BROWN, MINISTER OF HEALTH.

April 3rd, 1943.

To THE RIGHT HON. ERNEST BROWN, M.C., M.P.,
Minister of Health,
Ministry of Health, Whitehall, S.W.1.

SIR,—At a Special Meeting of the Council of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., summoned to consider the pro-

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