

visions of the "Nurses Bill," promoted by you and introduced into the House of Commons on March 17th, it was decided to communicate to you the very strong sense of indignation felt by the Members of the Council, that you had failed to consult the Associations of Incorporated Registered Nurses before drafting legislation, their members would be compelled to obey.

When in December, 1941, you received a deputation from the Association of Hospital Matrons, who recommended the de-grading of the Nursing Profession by the recognition of a roll of semi-trained—(if trained at all)—women terming themselves "Assistant Nurses" and gave them "a most sympathetic hearing," you will remember the Council of this College composed of highly-qualified Registered Nurses, invited you to extend to them the same privilege, so that they might place before you their considered opinion on this question of such vital importance to the community. This request you evaded, although repeated on two subsequent occasions.

Since which time it would appear that you have had under confidential consideration the drafting of a "Nurses' Bill," affecting the status and economic conditions of the Nursing Profession, concerning the provisions of which we workers have been kept in complete ignorance, until the Bill was drafted and presented to Parliament by you, containing many provisions which we consider injurious to the standards both educational and economic, which Registered Nurses now enjoy under the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919.

The provision in the "Nurses' Bill" to which we take the strongest exception is your proposal to utilise our Headquarters at 23, Portland Place, London, W.1, erected and paid for by Registered Nurses, and thus associate them with classes of semi-trained or totally unqualified women and to make our Governing Body, the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, responsible for their organisation and control.

The infinitesimal fee of £1 ls., proposed in your Bill, to be paid for these privileges, cannot meet the cost of compiling a Roll of Assistant, and other semi-trained nurses, of rent, rates, and taxes, service, clerical work, wear and tear, the compilation and publication of a printed Roll of Assistant Nurses, and the legal expenses which are inevitable, in maintaining discipline.

In the Bill before Parliament we can find no sufficient recommendation of financial support from the Treasury or elsewhere; we therefore must emphatically inform you that we Registered Nurses, incorporated in this College, refuse to be made financially responsible for any deficit incurred by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, in carrying out the mandates of your Bill.

Surely the day has gone by when enfranchised British women are to be legislated for without their knowledge and consent.

We strongly object to this very contentious legislation being sprung upon us during the War, whilst our colleagues at home and abroad are devoting their lives to the service of their country, by their care of the sick and wounded.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

ETHEL G. FENWICK, *President*
(Signed on behalf of my Council).

LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE GENERAL
NURSING COUNCIL.

April 8th, 1943.

To the Chairman and Members of
the General Nursing Council for
England and Wales.

MADAM,—At a Special Meeting of the Council of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., held on Saturday, March 27th, the Bill for the enrolment of Assistant Nurses,

and the control of "Nurses Co-operations" was carefully considered, and it was agreed to communicate its conclusions to the General Nursing Council for England and Wales.

(1) My Council wishes to protest against the provision in the "Nurses Bill" to give legal status to a class of nurse who has failed to undergo systematic training and examination, and thus qualify herself as a safe attendant on the sick, and specially that the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, the Governing Body of the Registered Nurses after training and examination, shall be responsible for compiling the Roll of semi-trained nurses, and guaranteeing them to the public, who would inevitably confuse them with skilled Registered Nurses, to the economic and social depreciation of the latter. As the Royal College of Nursing has promoted the agitation for the enrolment of semi-trained nurses, it should be made responsible for establishing and enforcing the Act.

(2) My Council also enters a strong protest against the use of the Registered Nurses' Headquarters, 23, Portland Place, London, W.1, which they have erected, for the conduct of the business of their Governing Body, the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, for the purpose of organising Assistant Nurses, and other classes of semi-trained persons.

(3) As no secure basis of finance is apparent in the "Nurses Bill," the provisions of which the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, without the consent of its constituency, has consented to administer, the Council of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., gives notice that its members absolutely refuse to be made responsible for financing a scheme which, in their opinion, not only degrades their professional status, but endangers the lives of the sick public.

(4) To prevent the public being imposed upon by unscrupulous Agencies and Nurses' Co-operations, my Council is of opinion that they should be organised by special legislation controlled by a Government Department, and not by local County and Borough Councils, the members of which have no expert knowledge of professional nursing, and whose administration might not be unbiased.

I am, Madam,

Yours faithfully,

ALICE STEWART BRYSON, *Secretary*.

THE COUNCIL REALISED PROFESSIONAL
RESPONSIBILITY.

The Council realised that the disastrous result of this de-grading legislation has yet to materialise, and that in the meantime its duty was the provision of skilled nursing for the sick poor, and the protection of the status, rights and privileges of Registered Nurses.

1. By enabling them to participate in educational facilities for higher professional qualifications and degrees.

2. To encourage them to study political and social economy, and the facilities for professional women to serve the State intelligently.

3. To protect their interests by legal advice and support.

4. To help meet, by financial aid, undue expenditure through ill-health and other misfortune.

5. To encourage them to realise the value of professional solidarity at home and abroad.

The Council decided to carefully watch the proceedings of the Ministry of Health and the General Nursing Council for England and Wales in the interests of Registered Nurses of which the fellowship and membership of the College is composed.

The Meeting then terminated.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)