

## OUR HISTORIC HOSPITALS AND THEIR NURSING STANDARDS IN DANGER.

Our historic voluntary hospitals, veritable homes of healing, have evidently a difficult future in front of them, and we sincerely hope that their splendid services to humanity will remain free, so that there may be no degrading in their nursing schools. There is little doubt that public hospitals, led by the L.C.C., are developing too much political control, hence the lowering of standards by bodies of persons ignorant of professional requirements. The Assistant Nurse question, an economic one, has arisen entirely from the demand of politicians and public bodies to dominate the skilled work of which they know nothing, and the damage already done will require the most strenuous effort on the part of experts to prevent further deterioration and to enforce efficient reform.

The Nursing Profession, unfortunately passing through a phase of effete control, has been the first community to suffer, and it will take a very strenuous effort to regain the status it has weakly thrown to the Ministers of Health and of Labour for manipulation.

Having helped to promote a demoralising Nurses Act, which has aroused a justifiable sense of indignation in the minds of educated nurses, we find Mr. Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour, inserting very costly advertisements of a very enticing nature throughout the public Press (it would be interesting to know how many thousands of our hard earned incomes are thus being squandered!) We note, however, that not one word is inserted to inform would-be student nurses that the de-grading system suggested by the Minister of Labour means economic competition with the semi-trained Assistant Nurse—unjust utilisation of Registered Nurses' Headquarters—and a most unjustifiable demand on the financial security of the Registered Nurse. We earnestly warn all would-be Student Nurses to make strenuous enquiries before they enter into any contract with the Minister of Labour, or his so-called "National Advisory Council for the Recruitment and Distribution of Nurses and Midwives," on which representation has been refused by Mr. Bevin to all organisations of Registered Nurses who claim professional self-government and liberty of thought and action.

It is hoped that at an early date a list will be available of Nurse Training Schools, the regulations of which enforce efficient professional education, State examination and Registration and effective self-control through an elected governing body—free from the autocratic dictation of the Minister of Health. This must be the first step to regaining the rights and privileges of which we have been deprived by the Ministers of Health and Labour in the Nurses Act, 1943, which, secretly drafted, was thrust through Parliament with such indecent haste and which is evidence of a determination to deprive what is largely a woman's profession of expression and liberty of action by ignorant politicians in high places.

We, therefore, warn would-be Registered Nurses to carefully consider their action before signing any document which may involve their future in conditions of servitude and de-gradation.

## MENTAL HOSPITAL MATRONS' ASSOCIATION.

The Mental Hospital Matrons' Association have rendered signally, valuable service in preparing and issuing the following suggestions for reconstruction in the Mental Nursing Services.

### RECONSTRUCTION IN THE MENTAL NURSING SERVICES.

In view of the urgent need for reconstruction in Mental Nursing and Mental Deficiency Nursing services in order to bring them into line with the other nursing services of the Country, the Mental Hospital Matrons' Association puts forward the following recommendations:—

1. The position of the Matron of a Mental Hospital or Mental Deficiency Institution should be clearly defined, and her professional and social status and her salary should be equal to that of the General Hospital Matron; the Mental Hospital Matron has extra qualifications.

The Matron should have access to the Hospital Committee and present her own reports on nursing and domestic matters. Where the Hospital or Institution is a large one, it is recommended that a Nursing Sub-Committee is desirable.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF.—It is essential that every Mental Hospital and Mental Deficiency Institution should employ an adequate number of qualified administrative staff in addition to the Matron and the Assistant Matron.

If the Hospital is a training school for nurses, a qualified Sister Tutor should be employed, also a Home Sister, and a Trained Night Sister.

3. NURSING STAFF. (a) TRAINED STAFF.—Trained Mental Nurses and Mental Deficiency Nurses should be recognised on the same basis as general trained nurses with equal privileges. Every opportunity to be given for post-graduate work at other hospitals. The recognition of the trained Mental Nurse by the Nursing Colleges is required for the improvement of the status of the nurses trained in our Mental Hospitals.

(b) JUNIOR STAFF.—Adequate training to be given for one State Examination. The State Registers of Mental Nurses and Nurses for the Mentally Defective to be retained, with the abolition of the designation "Supplementary," and no lowering of the standards required. (With the raising of the school-leaving age, and the general improvements in education at present mooted, it is considered that we shall be able in the future to attract the girl of sufficient education to conform to the standards advocated.)

All trained Mental Nurses pay ready and sincere tribute to the Royal Medico-Psychological Association and its great work in the training of nurses prior to the Nurses' Registration Act of 1919. The good work of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association as an examining authority is now superseded by the General Nursing Council. It is only in the Mental Nursing Services that two examining authorities must be served. This is a confusion to the nurse, and greatly adds to the work of the Tutor Sister. The work of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association in the training and recognition of the nurse should now be vested in the General Nursing Council and the Royal Medico-Psychological Association's examinations should be abolished.

PRELIMINARY TRAINING SCHOOL.—It is recommended that all training schools shall have a Preliminary Training School. Where the number of entrants to a hospital is too small to justify the expense of a school, it is suggested that two or more hospitals should combine.

Interchange of staff between Mental Hospital and Mental Deficiency Colony and between the Mental Nursing Services and general hospitals, is strongly recommended to the advantage of both branches of the profession. It is often

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