

## NURSING ECHOES.

The treatment as helots of Registered Nurses by Mr. Ernest Brown, Minister of Health, in his privately-drafted Nurses England Act, 1943, reminds us of the fact that what the rank and file of nurses are suffering from is lack of a liberal education. We warmly welcome the White Paper recently issued by the Government setting forth far-reaching proposals for recasting the educational service of the country after the war.

The reforms fall into two categories: those to be achieved by legislative clauses, and those to be effected by administrative action. We fortunately possess in the Rt. Hon. R. A. Butler, President of the Board of Education, a man possessing the highest qualities for the work of his department.

It will be remembered that his wise expression of opinion is quoted in the pamphlet, "A Demand for Justice for the State Registered Nurse," issued by the British College of Nurses Ltd. "Is education," he asks, "as organised at present, the best form of training for the world as we are likely to experience it for some time ahead?"

"I feel sure that this war against aggression has been combined with the rapid evolution of our social structure. . . . We shall want all our best minds and brains to see us through.

"Thus we must never abate or reduce our highest standards. On the contrary, we must make it more and more possible for the finest human material to be drawn out and reach the top."

Alas! in the meanwhile the highest standards of nursing education attained with so much self-sacrifice have been ruthlessly reduced by the determination of one ignorant autocratic man—the present Minister of Health—without the issue of a White Paper on Nursing conditions as they pertain at present, which should have been done.

It will be noted that this is being done in connection with a Medical Health Service.

Are we nurses doing all in our power to stem the agonising results of venereal disease? If not, why not? The question of the incidence of venereal diseases, their cause and prevention has been brought prominently before the public owing to the war.

The question for trained nurses is how best they can through instruction help to prevent and stamp out this appalling scourge, as they have a very special responsibility in relation to its prevention and cure. In the course of their work they are brought into direct contact with its results, and as health missionaries, they are concerned in the prevention of disease, and have many opportunities as trustees and confidants of the public for disseminating knowledge. It is of first importance that they themselves should have a clear knowledge of the origin of these diseases, the ways they are spread, and the means for their prevention. The immediate cause for activity is the realisation that something must be done at once to minimise facilities

for vice in view of the outbreaks of venereal disease which occur in every great war. Prudery in this connection is long out of date. Already we have heard from Dominion nurses and others of the alarm and resentment of women overseas from which thousands of young men have come to help to save the Empire, and have found themselves in a whirlpool of vice, with results to themselves and posterity far more appalling than the loss of a limb. It may not be possible to make men and women sober or pure by Act of Parliament, but it is possible by legislation to make vice more difficult, and it is the duty of politicians to deal with the question now, and, moreover, clear away the blindness of the average person in our midst. The pamphlets prepared by the Hon. Albinia Brodrick and Miss Lavinia L. Dock 30 years ago remain to this day epics on the subject. But we fear they are out of print.

The unmarried mother of 15 to 17 years of age is another tragedy which has increased in some districts 50 per cent. Here district nurses and health visitors may bring their influence to bear in warning young girls of the danger of association with unknown men—especially foreigners—of which there are thousands in the Kingdom, and whose moral standards are far from strict. Already some 6,000 illegitimate births have been notified.

We always feel cheered up after diving into *Una*—our Australian colleagues are a great example of professional intelligence. Thus, in a recent article on Registration of Nurses for War Emergency Service, their action has had much to do with the passing out of the politico-medical man-controlled State Nursing Services Advisory Committee, which proved futile in dealing with nursing concerns. "It is not putting any extravagant claim," says *Una*, "to state that had the Government taken the advice of the Royal Victorian College of Nursing in 1940, and set up a proper Nursing Committee with adequate and direct nurse representation, the probabilities are that instead of the public as well as the civilian nurses having had to endure the muddling and irritation of the past two years, the nursing service of the State, as has always been the case hitherto in time of war and national crisis . . . would long ere this have been functioning with advantage to the community and to the satisfaction of nurses."

Thereupon the Council of the R.V.C.N. sent a resolution to the powers that be—the Prime Minister and the Director of Man Power—asking for a greater measure of direct representation on the State Committees, and that these committees should be invested with some degree of executive authority and not be advisory only. Says *Una*: "Nurses earnestly hope that as this is one of the freedoms to which they regard themselves as justly entitled, the powers that be will see the wisdom of conceding and putting into effect their claim."

The President of the R.V.C.N., Miss J. Bell, deserves the sincere gratitude of Australian Nurses for the courageous lead she places at their disposal, and this we know she receives with acclamation.

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