

NEW MINISTER OF HEALTH AROUSES HOPE.

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

It is an old proverb "that people are governed as they deserve," and there is much truth in it.

Since 1943 when Mr. Ernest Brown, Minister of Health, and Mr. Ernest Bevin, then Minister of Labour, put their heads together and drafted "in confidence" a new Nurses' Act which provided autocratic power for the Minister, and practically enslaved the Registered members of the Nursing profession, constituted through enlightened legislation in the Nurses Registration Act of 1919, this journal alone has consistently exposed and opposed the injustice through which it was inevitable that nursing as a profession would cease to exist.

The apathy of Registered Nurses from the Matrons downwards, may have been influenced by war conditions, but it is no excuse for failure to realise the serious injury to the sick which would, and has resulted, from the Brown-Bevin legislation.

Thus when we opened our *Daily Sketch* on September 7th, it was with a keen sense of thankfulness that we read the article headed "Four Nurses Gatecrash Health Minister," by Charles Reid, as follows:—

"You can gatecrash even on a Cabinet Minister—if your cause is good and you have courage.

"Sister Hendey, Sister Mathias, Sister Simmance and Sister Murch, yesterday took two hours off, motored from the West Middlesex County Hospital, Isleworth, to Whitehall, and walked into the Ministry of Health.

"'Could we see the Minister of Health?' they asked.

Presently Mr. Aneurin Bevan's private secretary came downstairs. He was very sorry. The Minister was in conference and due at a Cabinet meeting shortly.

They Got the Appointment.

"'We shan't keep him more than a minute,' pleaded Sister Hendey. 'We have a letter here stating our case. We want to be able to go back to the hospital and say we have handed it over and seen Mr. Bevan.'

"The private secretary accepted the letter and said that he would have another word with Mr. Bevan. Within five minutes he was back, saying, 'Mr. Bevan will see you at noon on Monday.'

"The Sisters said 'Thank you'—and lingered in the entrance hall. Five minutes later Mr. Bevan passed through the hall.

"Seeing the Sisters he halted and said: 'Don't forget—noon on Monday.'

Unable to Continue.

"The letter which the Sisters left on behalf of the trained staff of their hospital and hospitals generally, made the following five points:

"(1) We are unable to continue any longer under the present conditions of acute staff shortage. The nature of our profession makes it impossible for us to strike. As a result we are being exploited.

"(2) Patients are being inadequately nursed. Wards are constantly left in the care of inexperienced and junior nurses.

"(3) Trained nurses stay on duty voluntarily long after scheduled hours. Owing to the scarcity of domestics, nurses have to clean wards and wash up.

"(4) The staffing problem could be alleviated by the early release of trained nurses from the Forces and a new method of allocating nurses when training is completed.

"(5) There is insufficient difference in pay between the student nurse in her last year and the staff nurse and the ward sister. There is too great a difference in pay between the ward sister and the Matron."

On Tuesday, September 11th, this journal received the following report from the Ministry of Health:—

MINISTRY OF HEALTH. Nurses Received by Minister.

The Minister of Health, Mr. Aneurin Bevan, accompanied by the Parliamentary Secretary, Alderman Charles Key, to-day, received four nurses from West Middlesex County Hospital.

The nurses impressed upon the Minister the seriousness of the nursing situation in hospitals, and stated that it was becoming apparent that patients were not receiving the treatment they should owing to the shortage of

nursing and domestic staff.

The Minister said that he was fully aware of the problem. Particularly serious was the position in sanatoria. He was in consultation with the Minister of Labour and National Service as to the possibility of securing an acceleration in the release of nurses from the Armed Forces. Efforts were also being made to encourage male nursing orderlies, on demobilisation from the R.A.M.C., to enter the hospital service, and the Ministry of Labour and National Service had launched a new recruitment campaign for hospital staff, in which a special appeal would be made to women leaving the Services and war industry. In addition, the



Photo]

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THE RIGHT HON. ANEURIN BEVAN, M.P.
MINISTER OF HEALTH.

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