

## NURSING ECHOES.

The agonising death of the martyred child Dennis O'Neill revealed at the trial of the inhuman monster Reginald Gough and the comparatively light sentence on this criminal for "manslaughter," which has shocked all nurses worthy of the name, makes us realise how essential it is that the law should be amended and that the problem of homeless children should at once be drastically reformed.

The Home Secretary has appointed Sir Walter Monckton, K.C., to undertake a full inquiry into the circumstances which led to the boarding-out of Dennis and Terence O'Neill at Bank Farm, Minsterley, and the steps taken to supervise their welfare. The inquiry is being conducted in public.

That's a blessing!

Lord Denman's admirable speech in the House of Lords will, we hope, awaken the public conscience. He said the institutions and homes for children required inspection by people appointed by the Government. Inspection was also necessary for children boarded out—as was shown by the Gough case. He was glad there was to be an inquiry into the matter, and hoped that as a result the public would learn why the home at Bank Farm was not properly inspected in the first place, why no visits of inspection were paid there for months on end, why no notice was taken of the recommendation that O'Neill should be removed, and why a doctor was not summoned until the boy was dead.

Let us hope that the publicity given to the persecution, starvation, and brutal violence which caused the death of this martyred child will save others from a like fate.

It is the irony of fate that after the Home Secretary and his wife paid a visit to Marlesford Lodge the now notorious establishment, recently in the limelight, and conversed with the young inmates, a few days later these girls, during an outburst of temper, smashed 12 windows, smashed furniture, and had to be hauled over to the police-court. These outbursts will be realised by nurses as calling for an entirely new approach to these unfortunate "adolescents." Let us hope it will be scientifically applied.

For the last 10 months those of us on duty in London will never forget facing V-bombs night and day, a test of nerve quality and instinctive determination to face death rather than obey Hitler. Alas! A total of 8,436 persons have been killed by enemy air activity in Britain since the V-bombs began on June 15th last; 25,101 were seriously injured and taken to hospital. A large number of the casualties were in London and in built-up areas of Southern England.

The monthly figures from the beginning of June to the end of February, previously announced, were 7,972 killed and 22,849 injured.

Mr. Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour, announces that domestic labour will be raised to a skilled vocation after war ends, financed by the State through domestic science colleges.

Girls will be required to reach standards of proficiency in a variety of subjects, ranging from cooking to Child psychology, and will "pass out" with a diploma stating that they are State-registered domestic workers "in much the same way as a qualified nurse becomes 'S.R.N., State Registered Nurse,' at the end of her period of training." Wages and terms will be fixed.

We are all for efficiency, but if Mr. Ernest Bevin treats his domestic experts with the same ignorant autocracy as he has treated Registered Nurses in the Nurses Act, 1943, which, under Regulation 19, makes these skilled professional women pay, if necessary, for the organisation of "quacks"—unqualified assistant nurses—he will find himself faced with determined opposition from the type of girl who intends to become a highly skilled and highly paid domestic expert. Mr. Bevin will find his *cordeau bleu* determined to eat her cake and have it too. The State will pay. Small blame to her.

The unpardonable treatment of the Registered Nurse by Messrs. Ernest Brown and Bevin, Ministers of the Crown, has yet to be realised by Parliament, when honourable Members will, we sincerely hope, see that this political smudge is wiped out.

Miss Theresa M. Tully, Chairman of the Private Duty Nurses Section of the American Nurses' Association, urges, through *Professional Nursing*, all private duty nurses to respond immediately to the country's great need for nurses. Her message states in part:

"All (private duty nurses) who are classified 1A by Procurement and Assignment Committees should apply immediately if we are to meet the needs of the military. Those who are not eligible for military service should make a real effort to find employment in an essential nursing service.

"Private duty nurses are not 'frozen' in their jobs. They are free to make their own decision about their work. Many of them have realised their unique privilege and have already joined the military services or taken jobs in essential nursing services. I am confidently expecting that members of private duty sections throughout the country will wish to be a part of the great group of nurses who are now writing another page of nursing history."

Whatever our political party may be, now is the time we nurses should adopt our policy—as in a few months the General Election will be in action—and we must not stand aside like sheep.

As Parliament is stale after ten years' power, we must inspire new members with our determination for freedom, and it is indeed a satisfaction to know that there is now a Fighting Fund for Freedom, inspired by a courageous policy prepared to instruct us how to uphold the rights of the individual to personal freedom and subject to his duty to the State, freedom to live and conduct his own affairs. Sir Waldron Smithers, M.P., is chairman of the Executive Committee, and his advice is invaluable. From the Hon. Secretary, Mrs. B. M. Young, information from 1, Dover Street, London, W.1., is courteously given.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)