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EDITORIAL.

THE REASON FOR THE SHORTAGE OF NURSES.

Presumably neither the employers nor Parliament realise that there are upwards of 120,000 Registered Nurses in Great Britain—well-educated enfranchised citizens—as both politicians and employers, and indeed their Governing Bodies, the General Nursing Councils for England and for Scotland, treat them as if they were non-existent; and it was not until this contemptuous and ignoble treatment resulted in retaliation that at last there arose consternation concerning the “shortage of nurses,” and the employers realised that the shortage throughout the country was not merely owing to the war, that the Press has been appealed to, and at long last is dealing with nursing and public opinion—which it has ignored for years—presumably through the influence of many of its proprietors who manage hospitals, and mismanage their nursing departments. The result of this contemptuous treatment of the Nursing *clientele* has been disastrous and culminated in a form of legislation, in 1943, drafted by totally ignorant lay politicians—Mr. Ernest Brown, M.P., Minister of Health; together with Mr. Ernest Bevin, M.P., Minister of Labour—and their salaried officials; none of whom had any personal experience of the training, duties, or responsibilities of a Registered Nurse, which touch vitally the health and lives of the community.

The solution is simple, but without a determined and courageous stand upon the part of the workers, the Registered Nurses will inevitably be further crushed.

The Brown Bill, drafted by the Minister, constitutes this official an absolute autocrat. This official has given himself (and his successors) *absolute power to define what is a trained nurse*, and it is almost inconceivable that ignoring the legal status granted to Registered Nurses in the Nurses' Registration Act of 1919, the Brown-cum-Bevin Act of 1943 permits the Minister to recognise as a nurse, and grant her legal status, a sect of untrained Faith Healers, as “Christian Science Nurses”—women who refuse to recognise the authority of the Medical Profession in the treatment of persons they attend.

WHAT ABOUT IT?

Are Registered Nurses, the Medical Profession, and the sick public going to submit to such legislation—or are they going to unite and sweep out of power ignorant laymen whose insensate love of power is sacrificing the lives of the community?

One thing is certain. The shortage of efficient Registered Nurses will continue until the Nurses' Act of 1943, so far as the status of Registered Nurses is concerned, and the notorious Regulation No. 19,

which gives authority to the General Nursing Council for England and Wales to use the Registered Nurses' fees to subsidise quackery is abolished. Let us organise definitely for the promotion of Justice for the Sick Poor, and sweep away any legislative system which makes it possible for any Minister of the Crown to enslave skilled working women. The Registered Nurses must unite and throw down the gauntlet to political autocracy in continued support of the principles for which we have all been fighting to the death for the past six years.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT NURSES.

We have in front of us a four-leaf manifesto on the organisation of “The National Association of Assistant Nurses” and very well their self-interest is placed before them. Indeed, it is a pity Registered Nurses who have worked and paid in the past for all the privileges grasped by the Assistant Nurse do not realise the danger of sharing their Headquarters, fees, and status with a group of women, who not only enjoy legal status, but have done so little to deserve it.

For instance, the Assistant Nurse, including untrained and semi-trained persons. V.A.D.s, C.N.R. and “Christian Science” workers from home and abroad, are being urged by their organisers, led by Miss Snowden, S.R.N., the President, “to organise without delay, whether they intend to do other work after the war, as it will furnish them with a valuable qualification, which may prove useful not only to themselves but to the nation.” While entitling them to nurse, “enrolment places them under no obligation to do so.”

In bawld English, grab privilege, but ignore obligation!

We learn that the demand is advanced by the London Branch of the Royal College of Nursing, that this group of women shall be admitted to membership of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain, whose basic standard for many years has been that of “Registered Nurses,” and which we have no intention whatever of abandoning. It is well, however, to realise this serious danger to which we may be exposed. now that we are re-entering, at an early date, upon National and International relations with the highly organised Registered Nurses of the world.

There must be no sentimental wobbling on this matter. Assistant Nurses, including the pretentious groups and “quacks” with which they are now associated, have a perfect right to co-operate as they are advised to do, but should they attempt to de-grade the National Organisation of Registered Nurses by so doing, it will be our duty to make it impossible for them to do so.

We feel sure we shall have International Nursing sympathy in this matter.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)