

## INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF NURSES, ATLANTIC CITY, N.J., U.S.A.

RECENT LEGISLATION AS IT AFFECTS  
NURSES IN GREAT BRITAIN.EXCERPT FROM THE PAPER READ BY  
DOROTHY M. SMITH, GREAT BRITAIN.

Recent legislation affecting Nurses in Great Britain is to be found in the Nurses' Act, 1943, and the National Health Service Act, 1946.

I propose to speak principally about the former, but, before doing so, I will deal briefly with the National Health Act, which comes into operation in April, 1948.

This Act makes it the duty of the Minister of Health "to promote the establishment in England and Wales of a comprehensive health service designed to secure improvement in the physical and mental health of the people of England and Wales and the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness, and for that purpose to provide or secure the effective provisions of service in accordance with the provisions of the Act."

It makes provision for the establishment of a Central Council which will advise the Minister on general matters relating to the services provided under this Act, and questions referred to the Council by the Minister related to these services. The constitution of this Council, includes among its members two registered nurses, and one certified midwife. There will be certain Standing Advisory Committees, and it is intended that consultative committees for special services, of which Nursing will be one, will be formed.

For the purposes of the Act, the country will be divided into approximately 14 Regions. A Regional Board is to be set up in each one. All nursing staffs become the employees of the Regional Board. This Board administers the hospitals which are grouped in each area, except in the case of the Teaching Hospitals—*i.e.*, those providing facilities for undergraduate or post-graduate clinical teaching. In such hospitals, the nursing staffs remain the employees of the Board of Governors.

The Act provides specifically for hospital and special services, including those for private patients. The Health Service to be provided by local health authorities, is to include the care of expectant mothers and young children, midwifery, health visiting, home nursing, vaccination and immunisation. It would appear that although the number of State Registered Nurses engaged in the preventative and after-care field of nursing has increased tremendously of late years, many more will be needed as this side of the Health Service is developed.

A great deal of discussion took place, and many conferences were held between the Minister of Health and representatives of the Nursing Profession before the Bill was passed by Parliament and became law. Many points are still under consideration, and it is hoped that this may lead to the implementation of the Act in the most wise, practical, and understanding manner. We are informed that the Nursing Profession will be free to carry out its work with its customary skill and forethought, and in close co-operation with the Minister of Health and its colleagues in the Health Service. We have reason to believe that the Management Committees of the hospitals, on whom the day-to-day

service of the hospital will still depend, will continue to have the welfare of the nursing staff individually and collectively very much at heart.

The Act provides the machinery and finance; the foundations of the organisation already exist and only need development according to the requirements of the Act. It will now rest with the various authorities and individuals, including all members of the Nursing Profession, and the Nursing Organisations, to work together with singleness of purpose, in order to achieve a health service second to none.

Miss Smith then went on to explain in detail the Nurses Act of 1943, and outlined the new status given to a second grade of women and men who undertake domestic duties and some bedside-nursing duties in institutions and who work under the supervision of Registered Nurses. Such persons are now called State Enrolled Assistant Nurses, and along with their official status, they receive a definite scale of salary and assured working conditions.

After a certain date, which has been postponed on two or three occasions, persons wishing to qualify for the Roll will have to give evidence of having undertaken two years continuous training and have attended classes and successfully passed a test.

Miss Smith ended her address by admitting cautiously that it was "not possible at this early date to envisage the full outcome of such legislation and its effect upon the Nursing Profession."

LUNCHEON GIVEN BY THE ASSOCIATION OF  
HOSPITAL MATRONS OF GREAT BRITAIN.

Friday, May 16th, 1 o'clock noon.

At the close of the Congress on Friday noon, the Matrons' Association of Great Britain rose to the occasion and invited some of their American hostesses to a luncheon at the Hotel Chelsea. Miss E. Cockayne, Hon. Secretary, was busily engaged during the week, getting out the invitations and trying to deliver them personally. One scarcely ever meets Miss Cockayne really at leisure, she seems to absorb and thoroughly enjoy work!! Matrons of Great Britain and other British members were present, and the guests numbered about 80, including prominent International figures such as Miss Effie J. Taylor, Miss Höjer, Miss Goodrich, Miss K. Densford and Dame Ellen Musson.

The floral decorations on the tables were lovely, and the menu was excellent. In retrospect, it appears as a real extravagance when viewed in the light of our English rations!! Needless to say it was recklessly enjoyed and appreciated. Miss D. M. Smith (Guy's Hospital) was the hostess, and most cordially thanked the American nurses, in the name of the British nurses, for all the kindness and hospitality they had received. Many guests made charming responses, and congratulated whoever was responsible for the lovely flowers, and when the party was over, each guest took away a flower in remembrance. Miss Cockayne received the thanks of the hostess for organising such a happy party.

The luncheon was the last of the social events in connection with the International Congress, and it brought a joyous close to a most happy and successful week.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)