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EDITORIAL.

THE REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF NURSES.

DAWN ON THE HORIZON.

From long experience we know that the darkest hour of the night is the one preceding Dawn, and we know also that the Profession of Nursing in Britain, nay, in the world at large, is now passing through its Dark Night.

The Profession entered its Twilight just over twenty-five years ago, and since then its night has advanced and the darkness has deepened; scarcely a beam of light has been able to penetrate its inky blackness. Two desperate global wars have shattered the very foundations of the civilisation in which we live, and the services of Trained Nurses are urgently required in every walk of life. As the need for Nurses increased, the supply rapidly decreased, so that now we have arrived at a state of impasse, when it seems that only desperate measures can relieve the situation.

Many Committees have met in the past for round-table conferences, and many and varied ideas and plans emerged for the improvement of conditions within the Profession. Yet the shortage of Nurses persists and increases, and now it threatens to wreck the New Health Act before it has a chance to prove itself.

In January, 1946, a Working Party on the Training and Recruitment of Nurses was called into being. Many in the Profession were sceptical of its usefulness and ultimate success, especially when the long succession of previous failures was taken into account. Only very recently, one Medical Journal thought the Working Party had hibernated and would emerge when it could quietly disband and steal away!

At last the critics are confounded, and the Working Party completely vindicated, for its Report reveals the hard work, the patient burrowing and research, the calculated sifting of facts and figures and the dogged perseverance of its members in spite of half-hearted reluctant help on the part of those who ought to have strained every fibre to assist the Party. And what is more, *it has produced a plan and a new hope for the Profession and the country.*

At last the gloom and darkness of the night have been pierced by rays and beams of light, and now the Dawn of a new Day is already lighting the distant horizon, and its rosy glow gives promise of a bright day to come.

The Working Party are indeed to be congratulated on the results of their arduous and selfless tasks. Their

Report is masterful in its grip on details and their suggestions for the cure of the ills in our professional life. When reading the Report one is conscious of the common-sense, the sound reason and the logic of it. It is as if X-rays had cast their searching light on to the Profession and had thus shown plainly its weaknesses and disease, in contrast to previous petty attempts to cover up our plague spots with high-sounding phrases and excuses and self-complacency.

It is a great pity that the suggestions of the Working Party cannot be made effective immediately; for there can be no doubt that these suggestions will make the Profession much more attractive and will "help to stop up the holes in the leaky boat." Unfortunately, however, time must elapse before the proposals can come into effect, because of difficulties of manpower throughout the country, and particularly during the next five years.

Some of the most interesting proposals are those dealing with Student Nurses, their manner of training and the ways in which they should be selected in order to reduce "wastage" to a workable minimum. The Report suggests that Student Nurses should no longer be regarded as junior employees, subject to an outworn system of discipline; but that they be accorded full student status so far as the intrinsic requirements of nurse training permits. The Report also advocates a wider basic training, including training in Public Health, and that the period of actual training should be reduced to two years, followed by one year's practice under supervision.

The Working Party have revealed by results of a "job analysis" that much of the present-day Student Nurse's time is taken up with domestic duties and many other duties of a repetitive type. By removing much of this domestic work and much that is repetitive, more time can be given to professional subjects, and thus a wider basic training can be given in a shorter period of time. They, therefore, recommend for all Nurses a two-year basic training course, "the first eighteen months of which would be devoted to the fundamentals common to all fields of nursing, and the remaining six months to concentrated study and training in a chosen field which may be general, surgical and medical nursing, or a 'special' subject. The State Examination would be divided as now, into two parts, the first to be taken at the end of eighteen months, covering the content of the common course, and the second at the end of two years, based on the content of the training in the chosen field." On successfully completing this two-year course, and passing her examination, the candidate becomes a State Registered Nurse; but not until she has successfully concluded a year's practice under

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