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EDITORIAL.

OVERRULED!

It is disappointing that, in spite of the Lancet Commission, the Horder Report, and the Working Party's Report, which are at least unanimous in advocating the maintenance of a minimum standard, the needs of the Student Nurse are still to be subordinated to the need for Hospital Staff.

Our sympathies should go to that sorely tried and much maligned body, the General Nursing Council, which is trying to maintain a minimum standard of Nursing in England. Was there not a great outcry, following the refusal of British Columbia to recognise reciprocity with England, against the General Nursing Council for the lowness of its minimum standard? Yet its decision, after an inspection had been carried out and after careful consideration, to withdraw approval as a Training School for Nurses from St. Leonard's Hospital, Shoreditch, has been overruled by the Minister of Health. The Minister appointed Miss M. F. Dykes, Matron of St. James' Hospital, Leeds, and a member of the Regional Board, and Mr. V. Zachary Cope, F.R.C.S., to hear the appeal. There are 15 trained Nurses of good repute and wide experience on the General Nursing Council and three Doctors, in addition to which their Inspector is a trained Nurse with Matron's experience.

In the House of Commons during last summer, Mr. Bevan, in answer to a question from Mr. Somerville Hastings, is reported to have said that "present conditions at Shoreditch are in many respects very undesirable." The Minister in allowing the appeal of the London County Council against the decision of the General Nursing Council has suggested that certain improvements should be carried out, and has promised to see that every assistance is given for these to be done speedily. But, in the meantime, conditions stand in *status quo* after over six months of negotiations, unless the much needed improvements are already in hand, which seems doubtful since the work, as the Minister pointed out, depends on the availability of building resources, having regard to other priority demands. One wonders when the previous General Nursing Council inspection was carried out, for these long overdue reforms do not sound a post-war problem.

Surely even in 1939 training schools, the sanitary arrangements should have been such that a sink was provided for cleaning Ward utensils and instruments separate from the sanitary annexe and Ward Kitchen? Surely at least one wash basin should have been installed in each Ward, and a sterilizer? More disturbing revelation still is the Minister's recommendation that

washing up accommodation should be provided in the Ward Kitchen. It is very surprising that the London County Council should have overlooked, before and during the war, the need for improvements in this Cinderella among its Hospitals, when so many others of its Hospitals offer first class conditions and training for its Nurses.

The fact that the Hospital has obtained 73 per cent. passes in State Examinations over a period of years reflects very greatly to the credit of the selfless and devoted women who, on the Wards and in the Classroom, have managed to inculcate good nursing habits under unfavourable conditions. Though surely three successes in a recent examination is a remarkably small number for a Hospital of some 100 beds?

While the Working Party's Report tells us that poor conditions are not a primary factor in wastage of Student Nurses, and that the "attitude and lack of sympathy of the Senior Staff" are, the investigators did not refer back to the Hospitals to find out whether there were any underlying causes of this attitude. Many a good Ward Sister, kindly and sympathetic as she may be, develops a frayed temper in trying to achieve even the rudiments of good nursing in the absence of necessities. All the more credit, then, goes to this devoted staff since, as the report of the investigators states, they maintained their happiness in spite of working against odds. It is strange that the investigation lay along these lines, since the General Nursing Council's criticism was that the Hospital failed to comply with the minimum requirements of a Nurses' Training School and necessarily took no account of the Girl Guide qualities of the existing Staff, nor of their willingness to work under adverse conditions.

For the Nursing Profession the implication is grave, and in the words of Lord Byron "produces that which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think," not only on account of the overruling of its Statutory Body, but because in the vexed question where the great need for improvement in Nurses' training and the maintenance of an accepted minimum standard conflicts with a local need for Hospital Staff, the Hospital's need prevails. This does not augur well for a speedy achievement of standard minimum conditions, without which, a standard training and improved status is impossible.

D. DE M. W.

We trust that the General Nursing Council for England and Wales will stand firmly and demand their right to uphold the authority assigned to them by Act of Parliament, adjudicating to them the responsibility to maintain the standards laid down for the care and safety of the sick which, in this grave issue, is threatened.

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