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*One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed tho' right were worsted, wrong would triumph.
Held, we fall to rise; are baffled to fight better;
Sleep to wake.*

ROBERT BROWNING.

Editorial.

Proposed Forfeiture of the Issue of the Nurses Register.

The personnel of the nursing profession will be alarmed to learn that their governing body, the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, as a result of its financial policy, a policy which for some time past has caused anxiety to those members of the profession who take an interest in executive work, have now to face very serious debt.

The Balance Sheet published for the year ending March 31st, 1948, showed a deficit of upwards of £18,000, and the anticipated deficit at March 31st, 1949, will probably amount to £33,000.

Naturally, under such disquieting conditions, the Council found itself compelled to call a Conference on December 14th, 1948, representative of the whole nursing profession, when, to our dismay, various proposed changes in existing procedure were made known.

Among the not unreasonable proposals we find the abolition of the annual retention fee, and substitution of an initial registration fee of three guineas for admission to the Register, which, in our opinion, would appear to be insufficient to compensate for the abolition of the annual retention fee, and is a very-short term policy in view of the unknown number of recruits over the coming years.

It is also proposed the fees for the Preliminary and Final State examination be increased.

In the forthcoming proposition we are reminded that there is always a danger in making drastic changes—namely, the danger of sweeping away good things with the bad, the rooting up of the wheat with the tares. To foresee this potential danger, and to guard adequately against it, requires the long-headedness equally with the level-headedness of the true statesman. We regret, however, to find that such desired statesmanship is lamentably lacking, as we turn to the most serious and detrimental proposition.

We consider such a solution a betrayal of the nurse's professional right awarded to her by Act of Parliament in the Nurses Registration Act, 1919, in which it set forth, "It shall be the duty of the Council to form and keep a Register of Nurses for the sick."

It is incredible that such a suggestion could be made on the plea that the heavy cost necessitates the discontinuance of printed copies of the Register of Nurses. In its place a Manuscript Register (one only) is to be kept, to be available for inspection at the General Nursing Council (only) by the public at any time—and verification of registration upon enquiry by telephone or in writing!!!

The Register of Nurses is the one tangible evidence of the nurse's efficiency to attend the sick—to which we have of necessity so frequently to refer—and surely no hospital should be without the Register for this reason.

Even in these expensive times we assess the cost of *printing* the Register to be rather less than 1s. 2d. per head, not so excessive a figure to be spent for the benefit of the nurses who provide the income to the General Nursing Council for England and Wales.

We are well aware of the high cost of clerical staff, but many will be astounded to learn that the clerical staff now costs the nurses upwards of £48,000 a year! Surely economy could be sought in this field—and not in approaching Parliament (as we assume the Council intends) to annul the provisions of the Nurses Act, 1919, to form and keep a Register and continue to publish it.

We fail to understand if, as the Council states, the proposed manuscript Register will be accurate and kept up to date, why it is impossible to produce the printed Register as it is at present, up to date, just as is the custom of other statutory bodies; and if one printing firm is unable to cope with the work, why not make other arrangements?

Looking back over the years we recall that in 1922 a great stand was made by a few courageous members of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, who were not content until the Register of Nurses contained a record of their training schools, of which nurses are justly proud.

We beg nurses, before it is too late, to realise that in this proposed legislation of the G.N.C. the privilege, at present enjoyed by them, of the publication of their efficiency will never be printed and issued as heretofore to the public.

We implore nurses, therefore, in gratitude to the late Ethel Gordon Fenwick for her great leadership in this work, to make a firm stand to prevent this further catastrophe to their profession.

It is not surprising that expenses have greatly increased, when it is remembered that the whole business of initiating the conduct of the recognition by the State of the Assistant Nurse was financed out of the Registered Nurses' contributions. Nurses will certainly appreciate the very sound management of their affairs during the tenure of office of Dame Ellen Musson, D.B.E., R.R.C., LL.D., Chairman, and Miss G. E. Davies, S.R.N., Registrar.

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