

## The Western European Group Meets at Zurich.

THE Presidents of the Western European Group of the International Council of Nurses held their annual conference at Zurich from August 25th to August 30th. Mlle. Bihet, of Belgium, presided, and Miss Wuest, President of the Swiss Nurses' Association, acted as host, with her assistant, Miss Naegeli; all the five countries in the group were represented, Miss Menalda coming from Holland, Miss Clamageran and Miss Herring from France, and Miss Armstrong from Great Britain. Discussions centred round the Conference at Stockholm, and the steps that the countries could take to help to put them into effect.

Mlle. Bihet gave a report on the Swedish Nurses' Association and the courses for secretaries held in Sweden after the conference. She said how much speakers had stressed the need to impress upon the student nurse the fact that she was training today for a profession that was organised and that through this organisation came the right to control conditions of work, determine standards of training, salaries, and so on; this the student nurse should learn during her training, so that she realised that she had a responsibility towards her profession and that, by supporting its professional organisation herself, she provided that unity that is strength. This was exemplified by the Swedish Nurses' Association, which all the Swedish nurses joined, paying a subscription of 50 kroner a year (equivalent of £3 6s. 6d. in English money).

This gave the association power to improve conditions; salaries had been raised, though, on account of the economic crisis, the scale approved (a 12 per cent. increase) had by agreement not been put into effect by common consent. The salary scale varied according to regions, being highest in the large towns and being graduated into five different scales because the cost of living varied definitely in different parts of the country. The scale was but little raised for the first years; but salary was almost doubled in 10 years and reached its maximum in 30 years. The financial support of the Swedish nurses also gave standing to their profession; the Association published its weekly journal, held courses for instructresses and dietitians and was affiliated to the T.O.C. It considered the right to strike legal, but only used it with circumspection: when conditions of work were not satisfactory, negotiations with the employer were undertaken. If satisfactory results could not be obtained by negotiation the Association advised the nurse to give her employer three months' notice. This did not leave the patient without care; a shorter notice was accepted in some countries.

Certain conclusions resulted from the secretaries' course. In the first place, most outstanding of these was the desire to improve the service that the nursing profession gave to the public and for this development of a high individual moral standard, a professional outlook and spirit of professional responsibility must remain the basis. Secondly, methods of nurses' education must be modernised; the nursing school must be separate from the hospital, so that the nurse was student and not apprentice; payment for training, by general agreement, made the student nurse value it more and take more interest in it; in hospitals with shortage of staff, improved organisation and equipment could often improve the service given; in matters of hospital and health centre construction, consultations between doctors and nurses for the study of plans and installations were desirable; further, student nurses should be initiated into the study of improvement in methods of nursing technique and organisation of work, into problems of administration—self-government being developed as far as possible—and into professional problems.

Finally, the desirability of co-ordinating professional organisations within the various countries was discussed, the strength of the Swedish Nurses' Association giving proof of the truth of the saying "unity is strength" (*L'union fait la force*).

Interesting discussions centred round all these conclusions, and every country had something to contribute. Switzerland provided two interesting examples of improvement in organisation. In one sanatorium, where hours were very long and staff, therefore, difficult to obtain, it had proved possible to reduce the hours by two or more daily after a visit by "Time and Motion" study experts, and this with the addition of only three more nurses. The experts had watched the nurses at work and had made a number of suggestions to save time and effort, some including structural alterations, such as the installation of an additional telephone to save walking. At first the plans had met with opposition, but when they had been put into action they quickly obtained the enthusiastic support of the staff, because they saw how much the new ideas improved the service that they could give to the sick in a given time, and made it possible to give better nursing care in shorter hours on duty.

In another, the new polyclinic at Basle, the installation of a department and special staff to deal with all-night admissions from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. had greatly improved the night nursing service, since the disturbance during the hours when the patients should be asleep was greatly reduced. The night admission unit had a staff of one doctor, four trained nurses, one specialising in theatre work and one in medical and one in surgical nursing, with two nursing aides to assist them.

From Belgium, Mlle. Bihet told of the system of training she has built up—a day study system of training based on what she had seen in England, but more generous than is usual here. The nurses have one day a week in the classroom and also one evening for study, in addition to a weekly free day from October to June each year. For example, on these study days, in the second year, the nurses may begin with a lecture from one of the doctors at 7.30 a.m., if he likes to begin his day early. After breakfast at 8.30 they go to the baths for an hour's swimming from 9 a.m., and after breakfast reassemble for another doctor's lecture at 10.45 a.m. In the afternoon they are in the gymnasium from 2 to 4, and after this have another lecture at 4 p.m. by sister tutor. Supper at 5.30 is followed by a lecture at 6 to 7 p.m., again from a doctor, and a conference with sister tutor till 7.30. It sounds a long day compared to that of the average study day here, but there is plenty of time free for physical training of one kind or another, and, as it includes three doctors' lectures, the need for an evening for study is obvious. The theoretical side of the training is certainly well catered for in this private patients' hospital.

In Holland, the Nursing Association has prepared an informative leaflet on the professional organisation, which is distributed to all student nurses at the beginning of their training; this, Miss Menalda offered to send to the other presidents. It is certainly a good idea.

From England, the other countries were particularly interested in the Whitley Council for Nurses, and the new salary scales, the principles behind the aggregate salary meeting with universal approval the use being made of T.W.I. in the hospitals.

The Group visited the Red Cross School of Nursing, meeting representatives from the different parts of the country. . . . Each of the Presidents told of something helpful from their own experience. The Presidents also saw the new polyclinic, the model ward unit, and the new hospital for the University School of Medicine, which is now being built and will provide 1,500 beds. In the model ward unit, an excellent idea was a cupboard-lined lobby to each six to eight bed ward (three of which make this ward unit).

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