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## Editorial.

### The Royal College of Nursing and the National Council of Nurses.

THE Branches Standing Committee of the Royal College of Nursing, by a majority vote at a recent meeting in Cardiff, have decided that the College shall sever its connection with the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Naturally, the more thoughtful trained nurses in the country would be curious to know why such an unprecedented step should be taken, and Miss Plucknett, the Chairman of the Branches Standing Committee has kindly enlightened us in an article published in the *Nursing Times*. It seems on the face of it somewhat of a contradiction in that an explanation is deemed necessary. If, as one is supposed to presume, the branches' representatives attended the meeting at Cardiff primed, after due consideration of all the facts by the branch members, with those members' views and wishes on such an important issue, to whom, it is pertinent to ask, is the explanation directed? If to the non-member readers of the paper, one would think it hardly conducive to their support.

This drastic step was taken, we are told, because, the matter having been under consideration for over two years, "it would be more statesmanlike to bring it to a conclusion." Odd, very odd, but convenient, that our worthy colleagues should have been overtaken by their statesmanlike conscience when their members had successfully returned from a Conference in Sweden, their presence at which would have been impossible had their conscience pricked them a little over six months ago when the College was the only affiliated member of the National Council which had not then paid its dues. Could such a consideration have weighed in the balanced judgment of our high-minded and worthy colleagues? We have all been looking forward for the past two years to this international gathering.

"Curiouser and Curiouser," as Alice would say, is the reason given for coming to a decision now—apart from statesmanlike instincts. It is that the Royal College delegates were outvoted on two issues at a meeting of the Grand Council of the National Council of Nurses. The President of the Royal College of Nursing, Dame Louisa Wilkinson, deprecates any thought that the College was trying to take

the place of the National Council of Nurses, and she said in her address at the Annual General Meeting on June 30th, "We can only hope to achieve our ideals if we present a united front." Now it would appear to my perhaps limited intelligence a contradiction to aim at unity while walking out of the one nursing organisation in England which does unite all parties, unless perhaps unity means a College unity, not a national one. Yet the President also said that the College was ready to associate with a National Council which did not interfere with the place and work of the College. As it reads to me there is no one reason given in Miss Plucknett's article, as to why the College thinks fit to take this step, which indicates in any way a clash of interests. Indeed, why should there be, except in so far as the Royal College having assumed some of the duties of the National Council during the war years might be reluctant to give them up. While maintaining its anxiety to uphold "the democratic tradition" the action of the Branches Standing Committee points rather to a hankering after autocracy.

The reason put forward for the allegation that the National Council has not "adapted its structure to keep pace with changing conditions," is that the machinery of the Council works too slowly for modern times. This coming from the one Member Body affiliated to the National Council, which held up the work of the Grand Council for weeks, not to say months, because it alone worked so slowly that the delegates were unable to report any conclusions on a matter which had been discussed and concluded upon by all other Member Bodies prior to the meeting, is an excellent example of the pot calling the kettle black.

While many of us can find it in our hearts to rejoice at the proposed action of the Royal College of Nursing, yet it is none the less a very serious breach of faith to those of its members whose only link with the National and International Councils is through that membership. Any nurses now working abroad under the Interchange of Nurses Scheme of the International Council of Nurses and whose appointments, therefore, are dependent upon their membership of the National Council of Nurses, will be placed in a very awkward position. It is to be hoped that the National Council of Nurses will be able to communicate with them and acquaint them of the position so that they can resign from the College which has let them down and join another Member Body affiliated to the National Council.

D. W.

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