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Next Meeting of the Council.

The next meeting of the Council was fixed for Friday, September 22nd.

Statement of Chairman of Council on the Work of the Council since the last Election.

AS CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL during the term of office of the present Council I beg to present the following report.

In 1945 the Council purchased the underlease of No. 17, Portland Place, for the work arising from the Nurses Act, 1943, in connection with assistant nurses made it clear that the offices would soon need to be extended. The house, until then used only as a private residence, underwent by degrees (depressingly gradual by reason of building restrictions and shortage of materials) those changes which were necessary to convert it to office use, and in March, 1947, the staff were able to move in.

Perhaps it is fitting to mention at this point that in December, 1946, the Council accepted with great regret the resignation of Miss Davies, the Registrar, who had been in ill-health for some time. She had held the post for 13½ years, following Miss Riddell, the first Registrar to the Council, and had in all given over 25 years' service to the Council and an appreciation of her work was put on record; it is good to know that her health has since improved and that she continues to play an active part in the profession as Hon. Treasurer to the International Council of Nurses. Her place as Registrar was taken by Miss Henry who joined the Council's staff in April, 1943.

The matter which has caused the present Council greatest concern and which has been constantly under review throughout its term of office is the question of the Council's finances. It is an onerous duty to safeguard funds provided over the years by nurses for the purpose of enabling the Council to carry out its duties towards those nurses. Judicious handling of the Council's business affairs and sound investments had in the past ensured that its financial position was sound, but the income derived from annual retention fees, fixed at a maximum of 2s. 6d. in 1919, had for some time been falling far short of the amount necessary to cover the cost of collecting such fees and of dealing with all matters relating to registered nurses, and the Council had been compelled to sell a substantial proportion of its investments. The Minister was approached with suggestions as to how the income of the Council might be increased, but before giving his opinion on the proposals he asked that the work of the Council should be first investigated by the Organisation and Methods Division of the Treasury; the Council raised no objection to this proposal and accordingly invited the Treasury to carry out such an investigation. The Report submitted to the Council by the Treasury in March, 1948, and forwarded to the Minister showed clearly that the Council was justified in its request for action to be taken; but a number of the proposals put forward required legislation to be amended before they could be put into effect, and legislation was awaiting the completion of a lengthy process—the setting up of the Working Party on the Recruitment and Training of Nurses, the carrying out of its investigations, the publication of its Report, the consideration of such Report by all interested bodies, and finally the consideration by the Minister of the views of such bodies.

Discussions on the proposed contents of the Bill covered a period of many months. Apart from the Nurses Act, 1943, there had been no nursing legislation since the Act of 1919,

and there was a general feeling that on this occasion the profession must seize the opportunity to overlook no point which should be included in the new Bill. It was not therefore until November 25th, 1949, that the Royal Assent was granted to the Nurses Act, 1949. A watchful eye was kept on its passage through both Houses, and the Council was indeed fortunate to have one of its own members, Mr. Diamond, to help with advice and to speak to the Bill from the floor of the House.

The points chiefly concerning the Council in the Act are its own reconstitution, involving an increased membership and a requirement that the 14 general-trained elected nurses shall be drawn one from each of the 14 National Health Service Regions; and the new power granted to the Council to defray expenditure incurred by area nurse training committees in regard to nurse training, the Council in turn being reimbursed by the Minister. It is earnestly hoped that the setting up of these committees, which will work in close co-operation with the Council, and the separation of the finances of nurse training from those relating to hospital administration will assist the Council greatly in its constant efforts to maintain and raise the standards of nurse training.

In addition, a statutory Mental Nurses Committee is to be set up on lines similar to the Assistant Nurses Committee and will take office three months after the new Council; the Minister may nominate, after consultation with the Council, two persons other than members of Council to serve on the Finance Committee; the Council now has power to consider applications for registration from nurses trained anywhere outside England and Wales and to require such applicants, if it thinks fit, to undergo further training and/or examination before registration; provision is made for the closing of the special parts of the Register at some future date, providing the Council is satisfied that means exist whereby the public may readily ascertain whether or not a nurse has been trained in the special branch of nursing concerned. The Council is no longer required to publish the Register of Nurses and the Roll of Assistant Nurses annually, but will publish instead four-monthly lists of persons admitted to and removed from the Register and Roll.

The following additional provisions of the Act are now being carried out: Collection of initial registration and enrolment fees from newly qualified nurses and of consolidated fees from nurses already registered and enrolled, collection of fees from hospitals outside the National Health Service approved or seeking approval as Training Schools, the amalgamation of the part of the Register for male nurses with the general part, the transfer of nurses from the List to the Register, and the opening of the Register to nurses trained prior to July 1925. It is gratifying to note that this work is already well under way, for it has entailed in the first instance the drawing up of Rules for the Approval of the Minister and submission to Parliament, a prodigious and complicated task in which the Registrar and the Solicitor to the Council received every assistance from the Legal Department of the Ministry of Health ensuring that the procedure might be effected at the earliest opportunity. The result has been the Nurses (Amendment) Rules, Approval Instrument, 1950, which came into operation on March 24th, 1950, and a similar instrument in respect of Assistant Nurses which came into operation on May 1st last. The approval of the Scheme of Election of the Council as re-constituted under the Act, which was required to undergo the same procedure, took place as early as February 1st, 1950, and was another instance of close collaboration with the Legal Department of the Ministry.

An additional duty laid upon the Council by the Act is the submission of an Annual Report in such form as the Minister shall direct. Perhaps this Statement will serve as the first Report to be so submitted.

One further Statutory Instrument should here be mentioned before passing to the work of the Standing Committees—

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)