

The Answer to Liverpool.

THE RECENT INQUIRY INAUGURATED by the Central Wirral Group of Hospitals, Cheshire, and carried out by the Department of Social Science of Liverpool University, had, as its underlying object the provision of the greatest happiness for the various staffs who work in those hospitals. It would appear from the report that they labour under the delusion that hospitals are primarily built for the happiness of those who work therein, and not—in the first instance—for the care and cure of patients.

Viewed from this angle, this may be a worthy object, in that it is also designed to retain the services of the various staffs within the Wirral Group, and thus indirectly ensuring a certain degree of service for the sick within their hospitals. But cannot this method be described as putting the cart before the horse? For it must be fairly admitted that the sole object of a hospital is for the care and cure of the sick. It must also be further admitted, that for this purpose, a certain amount of discipline and segregation of staffs is essential, remembering the old adage that familiarity breeds contempt.

It cannot be denied that army routine which requires quick decisions and actions, without questioning, in spite of its recent democratisation still retains its separate messes and, therefore, a degree of "class distinction," which Liverpool's Department of Social Science appears to find distasteful. Perhaps Privates in the army would prefer to dine and wine with Generals—they may even be happier doing so—yet the Generals retain their own separate messes, and the Privates, theirs, and thus the army continues to function.

The work of a hospital is not dissimilar in its need for immediate and unquestioning obedience. With the present state of education and of human relationships in our country, this would be impossible to maintain in any other way. There must be discipline in our hospitals for the successful treatment of the sick, and there must be those who wield authority and those willing to obey—sometimes unquestioningly.

Hospital routine cannot therefore be altered in the ways suggested by the Social Science Department of Liverpool University. Recruitment of Nurses, Student Nurses, and of Domestic and ancillary staffs must be made from individuals who are prepared to subject themselves to the common weal, just as the soldier does. In this respect, the suggestion in their report of careful interview of applicants for all grades, whether Nursing, Administrative or Domestic is most helpful.

It does not seem possible—as the report suggests—that "undue" emphasis is placed on the social status of the Nurse. Surely only the best type of woman is what we really require for the care of our patients? Failing the best, we admit that further education, training and discipline makes a good type of Student into an excellent and intelligent Nurse, and thus by the nature of her services to suffering mankind, she deserves a high social status if she has not attained it beforehand.

If the opinion of the general public regarding the social status of the Nurse, is the same as Liverpool's Social Science Department would have us believe, then it is not surprising that well educated girls fight shy of Nursing as a career of eminence, and our patients languish in

their sickness for the want of good nursing care. Perhaps "class distinction" is not taught to Student Nurses in the way the report would have us believe. It might be nearer the mark to suggest that a different code of behaviour is expected of Nurses, because they are professional women, and stand in a totally different relationship to the community, than do—shall we say—domestic workers?

For the rest, the report has nothing new to tell us. There have always been, and always will be, misfits in every walk of life. There will always be malcontents, who are too lazy and indolent to remove themselves from an environment which is utterly unsuitable to them; they will remain to criticise and obstruct the progress of those who are willing to submit themselves for the benefit of their patients, and to create a fine career for themselves.

Hospital authorities are striving with might and main to decrease the working hours of hospital staffs, but this can only be done as more recruits come forward into the different grades. It can readily be appreciated that the staffs of smaller hospitals might be "happier" than the staffs of the larger institutions, for it is much easier to create "home" conditions where there is a small and intimate staff. But this is not always the case. Staffs in the big hospitals, where there is an ancient tradition are often exceedingly happy in the knowledge that the tradition is being handed on to posterity through them; whereas friction could be rife in a small hospital badly managed.

It appears inevitable that male nurses will always be a minority group in hospitals, for nursing will only appeal to a small minority of the male sex. Nursing is a natural occupation for women—but it is not so for men. Therefore their defensive characteristics can easily be understood, and sympathy will not be withheld.

It remains to be seen whether or not Joint Consultation will be more successful in the future than it has been in the past. In the final analysis—it will be seen that determination of spirit, the will to surmount all difficulties, and generosity of mind and action of each individual will contribute most to the success of hospital community life, and to the care and cure of our patients.

For let us remember that the most glorious deeds of self-sacrifice ever performed by the peoples of this land, were not brought to achievement as a result of fair promises of a 48-hour week, more pay and the extermination of "class distinction," and other seemingly good things; but when each in his own class was promised "blood, sweat, toil and tears," or extinction as a nation.

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