

The Western European Group Presidents Meet France and Her Nurses.

Informal.

THE WESTERN GROUP of member countries of the International Council of Nurses held its annual meeting of the presidents of France, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland and Great Britain in Strasbourg on Friday, May 26th, 1950. Unfortunately, because of their many other engagements and their work, M^{lle}. Bihet of Belgium and M^{lle}. Menalda of Holland were unable to be present, however M^{dme}. Vernet, who had replaced M^{lle}. Wuest as President of the Swiss Nurses Association recently and Miss Armstrong, President of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, were able to join their French colleagues and take part not only in the Group meetings with the leaders of the French Nurses Association, but also in the annual general meetings which were held in Strasbourg during Whitsun week-end.

At the Presidents' meeting points of common interest were discussed. It had been suggested that a common diary for 1951 should be produced by the countries within the Group, to make their work, both at the national and international levels and within the Western Group, better known. This had not proved possible, but the Swiss Association had arranged to have its own diary for 1951. Among other things discussed was the question of exchanges between French nurses and nurses of other nations. M^{lle}. Clamageran pointed out that the position was complicated by the fact that in addition to language difficulties with which we are all familiar, the French laws did not allow the employment of foreigners in the state-owned French hospitals. The only opportunity, therefore, lay in the private hospitals. She had written to these, but so far had had only one reply, which was not encouraging. However, they were making inquiries and hoped if they could do nothing else, that they would be able to arrange short visits for fifteen days which would be of the study tour type, enabling the nurses to see something of the French hospitals and health work, and also do some sightseeing and get an insight into the differences between the manner of life in France and in her own country. If these plans materialise, we shall be told of them and will make them known to English nurses.

The French Nurses Association is hampered by shortage of funds, like our own, and the General Secretary, M^{lle}. Nazon is sister-tutor of a children's hospital in Paris, while the President, M^{lle}. Clamageran, is matron of the School of Nursing in Rouen, where both nurses and public health nurses are trained. They are thus both very busy people and their work for the association occupies a great deal of their free time, M^{lle}. Clamageran travelling from Rouen to Paris each week to work with her colleagues there and keep in touch with their headquarters at 54, Avenue Hoche, Paris.

Another subject of special interest was the much debated question of Article 6 of the Draft Covenant on Human Rights for the protection of the freedom of the individual. In this connection M^{lle}. Clamageran reported that some countries were not in favour of the Draft supported by the International Council of Nurses, but preferred the version put forward by the medical international association, namely that no one shall be subjected to mutilation or to scientific or medical experiment against his will, except it be for the good of his own health and he be able to give his consent by reason of unconsciousness or other such cause. At the recent Executive Committee meeting of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the representatives present decided to rescind the resolution as put forward by France and amended at their October meeting and to support the original draft of U.N.O.

The draft suggested by the medical profession accepts the fact that the medical professional man must sometimes make

decisions without the consent of the patient and depends on the conscience of the doctor to safeguard the welfare of the individual.

The members of the Western Group present expressed very special regret that M^{lle}. Menalda and M^{lle}. Bihet could not be present because both of them are likely to be out of office at the time of the next meeting in 1951. M^{lle}. Wuest of Switzerland was already retired to organise a post-graduate school for Swiss nurses in Zurich. She will be greatly missed as her quiet ease of manner and sound knowledge of European nursing problems has always proved very helpful. M^{lle}. Bihet has been President of the Western Group since its formation and her successor will be elected by correspondence owing to the incompleteness of the representation at Strasbourg.

At the next meeting, the Group decided to discuss the development of auxiliary nursing groups in the countries of the Group and the value of part-time nursing schemes with special reference to the successful uses of part-time nurses in Great Britain and the steps being taken to help the older nurses.

After the meetings of the Western Group were over M^{lle}. Héring entertained the guests to a delightful dinner party in her school of "Infirmières et Assistantes Sociales" at the Civil Hospital, Strasbourg. This hospital is almost a town in itself with over 2,000 beds and a variety of different clinics and departments which include of course, the medical teaching centre of the region. Part of one of the blocks has been adapted for the use of the pupils who live out and obtain their clinical experience in the wards of the hospital where the nursing is otherwise mainly carried out by members of religious orders. The students have lecture and practical class rooms, dining and attractive sitting rooms here together with smaller study rooms and offices for the tutors on both the nursing and public health sides. I was given accommodation in the ophthalmic clinic on the private floor, where there were delightful rooms for one or two patients on either side of a wide ivory-tiled corridor and double doors for quietness, the outer one being padded to make it sound-proof. The ground floor of the block provided for out-patient clinics and on the top floor in addition to public wards there was a fine operation suite. The walls were lined with restful saxe-blue tiles, with large glass windows between the two theatres, offices and sterilising room, so that the staff could see readily through the length of it. One theatre was kept for accident and infected cases. Here there was everything for emergency treatment and in addition to the common type of heavy pedestal magnet of German make, a very much lighter pattern, supported by a balanced wall-bracket, very easy to operate. The sterilising room, separated the theatre from the main one for clean cases. Here there were sterilisers, using dry heat for instruments, eye-drops and lotions. The instrument sterilisers were used at 180 deg. C. and the eye-drops and lotions in drop bottles and undines were sterilised at 140-150 deg. C. The dressing steriliser was in the same room and being provided with no exit for the steam, had unfortunately resulted in some of the tiles already falling from the walls, although this section had been re-equipped and laid out by the Germans during the occupation. The main theatre could be easily and quickly darkened by blinds and was equipped with diathermy and other apparatus necessary. Beyond the theatre was the theatre-nurse's office, with instrument cupboards and desk. The nurse kept a typed index file of all operation cases using a colour scheme for all the main types of case, yellow cards for cataract cases, green for glaucoma, and similar cases, pink for conjunctival and allied cases, brown for operations on the lids, white for plastic and other operations. Under each colour, the cases were filed alphabetically, so that they were easily found.

The meetings of the French Nurses Association opened with visits to various hospitals in Strasbourg on Saturday

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