

M I S C E L L A N E O U S

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES

From August 5 to 10, 1963, the Board of Directors of the International Council of Nurses met in Geneva. It was presided over by Miss A. Clamageran, Principal of the School of Nursing and Social Welfare of the University Hospital of Rouen. The ICRC and the League organized, in its honour, a reception which took place in the very rooms in which the International Conference of 1863 was held.¹

Nearly one hundred people representing National Associations from 59 countries, honorary members and heads of various departments of the central secretariat in London were assembled to review and approve the work achieved in the course of the two preceding years and to give the executive board directives relating to the fresh tasks to be undertaken. Six days of intensive work were hardly sufficient to consider the manifold activities of the International Council of Nurses and to define its future work.

It was clear from the discussions that all national associations, despite the great variety of their historical, social and cultural backgrounds, have a common aim, that of ceaselessly improving the quality of nursing services in each country. This quality of the nursing services is everywhere dependent on many factors, such as the number of persons actively engaged in the exercise of the profession, recruitment, the standard of professional training, social and economic conditions, the status of the profession and finally the medical facilities available.

Appeals and requests from various national associations for help and advice from the International Council of Nurses were

¹ The *Revue suisse des infirmières* (Soleure, 1963, No. 9), published an article on this subject of which we consider it will be of interest to reproduce extracts.

many. The Board of Directors was faced with a long list of tasks to which an order of priority must be assigned with due regard for resources available.

Some of the items discussed were the following :

1. In view of the considerable increase in the number of associations which have acceded to membership of the International Council of Nurses, contacts between the central secretariat and member associations are to be intensified, in order that exchanges of information be qualified. This implies an increase in the staff of the central secretariat.
2. Some national associations and associations in certain geographical regions (e.g. Latin America), require increased assistance for their internal organization, so that there is a need to decentralize the Council's action and to set up regional offices.
3. Each national association has its own particular problems to solve which are specifically related to social and political conditions in its country. The activities of each association should be developed according to the limits of governmental structure and within the legislative framework of the country concerned, without, however, acting in any way contrary to the undertakings assumed by acceptance of the statutes of the Council, the international professional body. This presents some associations with very delicate problems (due, for instance, to political or racial laws).

Each association shall pay particular attention to the question of obtaining State recognition of its right to negotiate. It is a primary duty of the national associations to acquire this right if they are to be of service to their members in a manner which the latter expect of their professional organization. In this respect the advice which the Council is able to offer is to be intensified seeing that the requests from member countries are numerous and urgent.

4. There is a great diversity amongst member countries as regards professional status, working conditions and type of training. In the latter field the drawing up of certain basic standards has shown itself to be necessary and the Council's Education Department is carrying out a thorough investigation into this matter.

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The "Nursing Services Division", for its part, is compiling a voluminous set of documentary material concerning working conditions, in order to be able to supply adequate information to those countries which ask for it.

The meeting expressed an earnest desire to have extensive documentary material concerning the construction and equipment of hospitals. It considers that nurses should be consulted in matters of hospital construction and that it is desirable for at least one nurse in each country to be specially trained for this task.

5. Each national association has particularly at heart the question of inducing all nurses in the country to become members. This is one of the public relations aspects which have constantly to be borne in mind and followed up. The advantages to be derived from membership of the association should be brought home to nurses, i.e. the advantage of international recognition, especially when abroad for work or study; the welcome to be found at other national associations; the right to take part in courses and seminars, both national and international, for the purpose of completing their training, etc., etc.

6. The International Council of Nurses keeps a careful watch on matters relating to professional ethics. Its international code of nursing deontology is the basic document in this respect. It is studied and is the subject of instruction in the training courses in all member countries. The wording of a promise or oath, upon the award of diplomas, was the subject of an international competition in which Switzerland took part.

7. In view of the ever more numerous tasks devolving upon the Council, it has become necessary to undertake a study of its aims, structure and official bodies. Many proposed amendments to the statutes were tabled in the course of the debates.

8. The next meeting of the Management Committee will take place in June 1965, at Frankfurt-on-Main. It will coincide with the International Congress of Nurses. Preparation for this Congress is already in progress and all nurses who are members of a national association may attend it.