

General Policy in Nursing Education

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ERE

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I have given a good deal of thought to the general principals and policies underlying our program in Nursing Education in Europe. While my own thinking has been criticized by recent comment by Dr. Russell and Miss Read and by Miss Goodrich and Miss Clayton, I am inclosing herewith memorandum of my recent conferences in this connection. While questions have definitely been raised in these conferences, my own general thinking and review of our work leads me to believe that we should begin some different emphasis in our program. I think my feeling in the matter may be summarized as follows:

1. In aiding in the creation of a new profession in the several countries of Europe we have an obligation to make sure that our standards are sufficiently high and courses of training reasonably adequate. There is no great difficulty in keeping educational progress at a low level or attracting to them students of poor preliminary training. In introducing nursing or public health or medicine, we have I believe a special obligation to set standards well above the level that we may expect the country as a whole to maintain. Unless we do this our elevating influence is negligible. Adherence to this general principal has characterized Foundation effort generally. In aiding in the introduction of Modern Medicine in China we have created a school at Peking of very high standards. While we do not expect that medical schools generally throughout the country will reach this standard, it is believed that the presence of this ideal is more important than the training of any large number of students in this specific school. In aiding in the training of health officers cooperation has been given to Johns Hopkins University and Harvard in this country for the establishment of schools of high standards and of distinctly scientific tendencies as evidenced by the amount of time given to research and advanced work. In medical education our attention has gone almost entirely to a small number of schools of the very highest standard in given countries.

2. A good deal of emphasis has been placed on the need for numbers of nurses and health visitors and upon the inability economically of countries of central Europe to maintain courses of great length or to insist upon candidates of high preliminary training. High considerations of general economic and educational conditions must be given due weight. I wonder if we have not been unduly impressed by them in considering nursing education. In China and Siam there is the same need for numbers and there is a great lack of financial resources. Yet this has not prevented us from insisting upon high standards in schools that we have aided in these standards. In general I believe countries will pay for services which they think valuable. I believe that it may be a disservice to help the countries of Central Europe to a belief that nursing is a service which may be purchased cheaply.

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3. In considering aid which we may give to schools I think we may regard ourselves in nursing as in medicine and health, to have no obligation to give to schools generally, and no obligation to try to supply the rank and file of any profession. Our obligations rather are to make demonstrations, set standards, and make possible educational ventures beyond those which the countries themselves would be able or willing to make unaided. We have no obligation I think to assist moderately good schools of nursing. I think we would be entirely justified in reserving our assistance to a few "light houses", to the occasional school that is about to make a real contribution by its influence, and by the leaders and teachers of other schools which it may turn out. I realize of course that this is just the principal on which we have been operating. I believe however, that we can put still more emphasis upon eliminating the mediocre schools from our consideration and restricting our aid not only to the establishment of standards (a point to which we may not have given sufficient attention) but to concentrating our aid in those schools which will furnish the leaders and teachers for other institutions in the given countries.

4. In these considerations I am suggesting not so much specific changes in our policy as a gradual reshifting of our emphasis. The schools at Lyon, Cracow and Zagreb, all I think represent distinct advances under existing conditions, distinct elevation of existing standards. As we contemplate aid in other countries, however, particularly in such a country as Czechoslovakia where educational standards are high, I think we can properly insist upon preliminary educational requirements, at least of the full high school course. I believe also that in such a country as Hungary we will do a great service by insisting upon the selection from that group that has had adequate general education. In this group of course I would include not only the education of the public schools but the educational equivalent which has been received by private tutors and otherwise by members of families of good standing. At the moment I am inclined to think that our emphasis might be on raising preliminary requirements rather than extending the length of the course. I believe, however, that we shall have to think through again, very carefully, the whole question of content of these courses. In this you may want to use Miss Johns to make a special study of considerable length of just what may seem to be the proper content and the ~~and the~~ proper length of time, particularly for the bedside aspects.

These principals that I have been discussing impress me increasingly as sound and their application in our program as inevitable. I am outlining them at present partly because they have been criticized in my mind recently and partly because before we consider launching upon a program of enlargement financially I think we should satisfy ourselves of the soundness of our standards and general policies. Unless we are making distinct, constructive and permanent contributions we can not of course recommend continued expenditures.

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I should like to have an expression of your thinking on these matters. As I have said I am not advocating specific changes. We should I believe, both in New York and in Europe, be giving continued attention to these matters. At the first opportunity which I hope will not be too many months hence, we must have personal conferences on these matters.

Very truly yours,

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