

SCHWABE

Nursing

April 14, 1945

Mr. W. A. Bramhall
Box 525
Miami, Oklahoma

Dear Mr. Bramhall:

I am just in receipt of your notation with reference to the drafting of nurses and my speech on the same.

You state that I drafted the boy for Army service at \$50 per month. I know you will permit me to correct this statement, for you will recall that I was not in Congress until January 3, 1945. Hence, I had nothing to do with the drafting of boys. However, I have four sons, all in the service, and I think I have a fair appreciation of a father's interest in his sons in the military service.

My youngest son, 20 years old, now is somewhere in Germany in General Patton's Third Army. He is still a private and has been in the European theater in the midst of the fighting since the invasion. Another son put 27 months in the Marines in the Southwest Pacific. Another is a bombardier, and another is in the air corps.

I appreciate very much your reply, but I simply wanted to let you know that I had nothing to do with the drafting of the boys and that I know full well the needs of our service men for proper nursing. However, I have no sympathy with those who sought to take the young and inexperienced girls before they took the seasoned and experienced nurses. Neither do I have any sympathy with the Administration's demands that we do not use our more than 18,000 graduate nurses for the nursing of Negro soldiers and the 6,000 or more male nurses. All of these should be taken before they begin at the bottom of the barrel and take the youngest girls. This would render more efficient service and more quickly supply the alleged present needs.

With kindest regards, I am

Yours very truly,

GBS:CMG

George B. Schwabe, M. C.

Angels of Mercy Drafted

Remarks of
Hon. George B. Schwabe
of Oklahoma
in the
House of Representatives
March 12, 1945

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REMARKS

OF

HON. GEORGE B. SCHWABE

Mr. SCHWABE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, the subject itself bespeaks a contradiction of words. We have learned to think of angels as messengers of God to man, to show man a way out of his difficulties. They seem to have supernatural wisdom and are sympathetic. Man was created a little lower than the angels. Think of these mercy messengers being drafted by men! It is a contradiction in terms to say that men are drafting the angels of mercy.

Our nurses have long been looked upon and called angels of mercy. They have come to us when we were not able to care for ourselves and have ministered unto us in the darkest hours. Next to our mothers, their mercy has transcended that of any other profession or class of people. They have always responded to the call of suffering humanity. They are still doing so. But we in Congress have been asked to draft them to perform their ministrations of mercy for our wounded and sick casualties of the battlefield. It is unthinkable that we should have to draft nurses. We do not have to draft them. They are available if and whenever given an opportunity to show mercy and minister to the needs of our boys who have fallen in line of battle. It is a reflection upon this honorable profession to talk about drafting nurses. It is a serious reflection upon the profession and those who seek to draft them to say that this group of our population has failed to respond to the call so urgently needed.

But this is a day of drafting. It is a day of conscription. Drafting and conscripting seem to be the order of the hour at Washington. There seems to be a tendency to get away from the idea of allowing people to volunteer as patriots. Someone wants to dictate, regiment, control, and arbitrarily draft everyone into some form of service for the Government.

Recently, the House of Representatives passed a bill seeking to draft labor. We were told it was imminently necessary that it be enacted immediately, that there was a shortage of manpower, that the essential war industries had to have men work in their plants and that they

would not be able to get them unless they were drafted. That was approximately 2 months ago. The House passed the bill more than a month ago. The Senate refused to adopt the same bill that was passed by the House, but has just rewritten the measure to suit the ideas of its members. No law conscripting labor has yet been finally passed. It is to be hoped that none will be passed which will destroy free labor in America and will make it possible for large corporations and individuals to make a profit on the cost-plus-fee basis that so iniquitously prevails throughout this country, out of the sweat of conscripted, forced, or slave labor.

We have been told that the Army and Navy need a lot of nurses. No one seems to know just how many they need. Figures vary, depending upon the source from which they come and the time the estimates are made. Everyone thought we had all the nurses we needed until sometime in December when we were suddenly told we were far short of the requirements. Apparently, those in authority were not willing to approach the problem on the basis that members of this noble profession might volunteer their services. Some have even said that all people should be drafted, all men and all women. Some go so far as to say that capital and property should be conscripted. Of course, there are those who would make us all cogs in the machinery of the state and subject to a dictator or the regimentation of those in actual or assumed authority.

The question of drafting nurses has come as a shock to the finer sensibilities of the people. It is interesting to observe the provisions of H. R. 2277, as the same was reported out by the House Committee on Military Affairs and was passed with numerous amendments by the House last week. An analysis of this bill as originally presented is illuminating. It was first sought to have Congress declare "that to provide adequate nursing care for the armed forces of the United States it is imperative to secure immediately the services of additional trained and qualified nurses."

Then section 2 of the bill provided that every female residing in the United States who on the day of registration fixed by the act was between 20 and 45 years of age and was a registered nurse anywhere in the United States or a grad-

uate of a school of nursing and eligible for examination to become a registered nurse, should become subject to registration and selection for and induction into the land and naval forces of the United States under the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, as amended, with certain exceptions. The bill then specifically provided that no such registrant under the act should be ordered to report for induction "until after all qualified graduates of the United States Cadet Nurse Corps registered with such board, who are not deferred pursuant to the provisions of this act, have been ordered to report for induction." After certain provisions were made requiring the registrants to meet the requirements of the land or naval forces before induction, the bill provides the President shall prescribe such regulations as may be necessary to carry the act into effect and that the "regulations may provide for the classification, selection for induction, and induction of females pursuant to this act under procedures and quotas different from those governing men." Section 5 makes the act applicable "to unmarried women only, but shall not affect the voluntary recruitment of any qualified women for the Army Nurse Corps, the Navy Nurse Corps, or the Nurse Corps of Naval Reserve, or the appointment of members of such corps as commissioned officers as now provided by law."

In an effort to stress the importance and urgency of the prompt passage of the bill, the chairman of the Military Affairs Committee of the House stated "that we have today in hospitals throughout the world more than 520,000 wounded men and that they are coming back from field installations to hospitals at the rate of 16,000 per day and that the number is on the increase." No one stated how many of these are American boys.

In the arguments and discussions in the House, the following facts were brought out: In 1940 there were less than 1,000 in the Army Nurse Corps. On December 31, 1944, there were 42,000. As of that date 81,000 nurses had volunteered. Every quota was met until May 1944. The Surgeon General submitted a request for 50,000 nurses to the General Staff. Plans were under way for a recruitment program and for a complete registration of the nurses of the country between the ages of 20 and 65 years when the War Department, on December 5, 1943, announced that only 40,000 nurses

would be needed. Already 36,000 or 37,000 had been secured. Hence the O. W. I. did not go forward with its recruitment program when only 3,500 nurses were involved. Less than 4 months later the War Department found it necessary to increase the number to 50,000, the number originally requested by the Surgeon General. Now they say they want 60,000. Who knows? Whom shall we believe?

The let-down in the effort was a felt factor. The success of our forces in France further retarded the voluntary enlistment. Naturally the nurses felt they would not be needed and ceased to come in voluntarily. In the fall the Surgeon General sent out a recruitment letter for 27,000 nurses. Organized advertising methods were employed. Apparently no further word was received from the Army until December 20. Large sums of money were contributed by advertisers to stimulate the patriotic interest for nurses to volunteer. Many believe that if the country, and particularly the nursing profession, had been thoroughly aware of the needs as fast as they appeared and if there had not been such strictness in the requirements for eligibility, all nursing quotas would have been filled rapidly.

Last fall we were told that victory was just around the corner and the European war would soon be over. Labor, nurses, everyone began to look out for themselves a little. They sought new lines of employment. They began to leave the defense industries in great numbers. From what we were told, all had a right to believe it was using good judgment to find permanent employment in some industry that would continue to operate after the cessation of hostilities. The nurses could not be blamed for heeding the same suggestions and following the same psychology.

There are several phases of this bill that inherently were not right. In fact, the bill was almost completely rewritten in the House of Representatives while it was under consideration there. The original draft provided for the registration and drafting of only female nurses. Why the authors of the bill objected to the inclusion of male nurses was never explained to the satisfaction of many Members of the House. Someone said there are 2,000 registered male nurses in the United States Army, only 20 percent or approximately 400 of whom have

commissions as nurses. About 1,600 are buck privates or working in some capacity other than that for which they have been prepared and so highly trained. As a matter of common sense, everyone knows there are many cases where a male nurse is preferable to a female nurse among the Army casualties. Their services certainly should be used instead of drawing so heavily upon the female nurses. Likewise, there are estimated to be some 5,000 or 6,000 other registered male nurses in the United States, not in the service, many of whom can be used to great advantage.

It was further brought out that there are some 9,000 Negro nurses, perhaps all females, and only 330 of these have been used in the various nursing corps for wounded servicemen. It is unthinkable that the services of these people are not being used. This should supply us with anywhere from 4,000 to 6,000 additional nurses, depending upon how many meet the required arbitrary tests of the Army.

The bill as it originally was presented to the House last week directed the drafting of female nurses, young girls from the United States Cadet Nurse Corps, before resorting to the older female nurses. The only explanation ever offered for this was that these cadet nurses had received a part of their training at the expense of the Federal Government. The truth of the matter seems to be that some of them had already begun their training at their own expense and that of their families, and that the Government supplemented this and finished paying for their training courses. Others who entered later have had their courses financed to date entirely by Federal aid. These girls average very young. Apparently 25 percent are under 20 years of age, 43 percent under 21 years, 15 percent under 22 years, and 7 percent under 23 years. In other words, very few are over 23 years of age. Experience has taught the Red Cross that they should not send girls into the nursing service or into any overseas branch of their service until they are at least 25 years of age. But the nurse draft bill sought to take these Cadet Nurse Corps girls, 80 percent of whom were below 23 years of age, and send them into the most trying positions for overseas duty. If the question is put directly to the father or mother of the girl of such tender years, they are almost sure to appreciate the danger that lurks

ahead and suggest that the more experienced and older nurses be sent first and the younger ones sent only when it becomes absolutely necessary and the supply of older ones is exhausted. Numerous letters that have been written by the boys in overseas service in this war indicate very clearly that younger nurses should not be taken first. In many instances they have plead with their fathers and mothers not to permit their younger sisters to volunteer for such service.

The argument that the Government has paid part of the expenses in educating and training them to become nurses is very weak when all of the facts are shown. At the time these girls were persuaded to enter the nursing profession, they were asked to sign a contract which stated:

I agree, if accepted, I will be available for military or other Federal governmental or essential civilian services for the duration of the present war.

But remember that most of these girls were only 18 or 19 years old and without any prior business experience. They did not appreciate the technical language of the contract they were required to sign. They relied upon the statements put out by the Government in pamphlets and folders to induce them to enter the service. One of these distributed by the United States Public Health Service to lure these girls into this profession and branch of the service was in the form of a small pamphlet. On the back of this pamphlet these words appear:

Enlist today in a proud profession. The corps requires you to make but one promise, that you will remain in essential nursing, civilian or military, for the duration of the war. The choice is yours.

Our girls and their parents, many of whom are not versed in law, have a right to rely upon those apparently in power and assuming authority and the statements that they made. This literature published by our Government to induce these children to enter the service should contain only statements of fact, and the children and their parents have a moral right to rely upon the statements made therein. This should be far more binding upon the Government than the strict letter of the law when dealing with these people of immature years, some of them

yet minors under the age of 18 years. Furthermore, the Government conceivably was just as much interested in providing a new group of nurses for our civilian population as for the needs of our servicemen. It is wholly conceivable that the Public Health Service had in mind at the time it issued these circulars they would use these cadet nurses for the civilians and relieve the older and more experienced nurses from home duties and enable the oldsters to nurse the wounded and sick of our armed forces.

Volunteer nurse organizations are helping most nobly to nurse the sick in our hospitals at home in order to relieve the trained nurses there and enable them to go into foreign lands or into our Army and Navy hospitals. Many, many reports were made by Members of the House that their respective districts had great numbers of nurses who had volunteered for service but had not been accepted, for reasons not explained. No one knows the total of such cases in the United States. All of these should be accepted before the young girls are drafted or before even the older ones are drafted. They are continuing to volunteer every day and the noble profession of nursing will see that this is done, if they are not drafted. Many believe that all requirements can be met without the draft.

In one hospital, 30 out of 31 nurses graduated on March 2, volunteered, took their physical and passed. Many more similar instances could be cited, running into the thousands of immediately available nurses ready to volunteer and who have volunteered their services. Some have been waiting for assignments for 30 days or more and are wondering when they will be called. Add to this the great untold volume of immediately available qualified and certified volunteers, the several thousand male nurses, and the several thousand Negro female nurses, it is reasonable to anticipate that practically the entire present alleged need of nurses between now and July 1, of 20,000 or any other required number, will be available.

The Navy has resorted to the voluntary method and has succeeded, without asking for a draft of nurses for the Navy Nurse Corps. In many newspapers there have appeared articles during the last few days stating that the Navy has successfully recruited further volunteer

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nurses. Why cannot the Army do the same? The Army is about three times as large as the Navy, and the Army Nurse Corps is necessarily about three times the size of the Navy Nurse Corps. But there should be no difference in principle, if the Army made the work of nursing as attractive and inviting as the Navy has and if those in charge had wanted volunteers.

Nurses' associations, clubs, hospitals, and such organizations have wired us repeatedly from our districts and States that this bill should not be passed in its original form, and that there is no need to draft nurses. It certainly is apparent that there would be no need for this draft bill if the Army had resorted to the voluntary method and was willing to accept male nurses, Negro nurses, and give the voluntary system a fair chance. Potent facts supporting these statements were brought out in the arguments and several amendments were offered, many of which passed the House, incorporating some of these provisions in the bill. What the Senate will do with the bill no one can safely predict at this time.

But the order of the hour seems to be to draft people, to coerce them. Representatives of industry, labor, and agriculture alike were almost unanimous in denying that the labor draft bill was necessary. But we were told it was necessary, and it passed under the hue and cry that the Army officials said it was necessary to sustain the war effort. The same tactics and language were used in connection with the drafting of nurses. Possibly it is only another step for the drafting of all of our American women for some form of service under bureaucratic dictation and regimentation. The draft of labor and of nurses, it may be predicted, will be followed by the drafting of women for war plant and military service.

If the American people were told the truth about what is going on and kept informed and if they could rely upon promises and information furnished by the various bureaus and other controlling agencies of Government, it is easy to conceive that they would become more interested in carrying on this war to a speedy and successful conclusion by contributing their money, their labor, themselves, and their children, to hasten a final and conclusive victory. Slave labor or conscripted labor will not produce anything like as much in comparison as

free labor. Drafted nurses will not perform the same service with as much interest and sympathy and effectiveness as nurses who volunteer their services. The same will be true with reference to conscripted people in any branch of the service. Furthermore, this will tend to demoralize the home, the basis of our civilization. The sacredness of the home will be seriously impaired and the morale of our people shocked to think that the Congress of the United States has seen fit to go from a system of obtaining volunteer nurses to that of requisitioning, conscripting, or drafting of members of this noble profession.

Shall we resort to the same tactics that were pursued by Hitler in Germany? Shall we be frightened into heeding the call to duty? Or, rather, should we not appeal to the patriotic instincts of men and women to rally to their country's call? The American people will do it if approached in the right way. They will do it if they are permitted to come into an open door with truth and confidence staring them straight in the fact. But the American people have never accepted the principle of being forced or drafted or required to do something because some higher official, be he executive or military, tells them that they must do it.

Never before in the history of the world has anyone told us that it would be necessary to draft these angels of mercy, as we so fondly call and recognize them. Never before has anyone said that our youthful and inexperienced children of the fairer sex should be sent into the horrors of war before their older sisters of more experience and judgment are sent. It is not only the effect it will have upon the people at home, but it stands to reason that more efficient service can be rendered our worthy sons if the more experienced and better trained nurses and people of more mature judgment are sent to their bedsides.

Another serious apprehension is that the drafting of nurses, as this bill originally sought to do, and perhaps as it even has been amended by the House, will discourage other girls from entering the profession. Their parents will not so readily consent and the whole program of future recruitment is likely to fall. The available statistics and the experiences of nurses' training schools and hospitals today show that this reaction has already become pronounced by

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the fact that fewer girls are entering the profession during the past few months.

The thousands of Negro nurses can render a valuable service, and will do so if given an opportunity. It was stated on the floor that some 2 weeks ago a Negro nurse, who had graduated as valedictorian of her class in the Central High School of Cleveland, made application to join the Army Nurse Corps. The Army official wrote her:

The Surgeon General directs me to inform you that your application is rejected because there are no facilities for colored cadets in the Army hospitals.

Someone has said that there is not a Negro nurse in the Navy Nurse Corps, and that there are only approximately 330 Negro nurses who have received commissions in the Army out of a group of 8,000 Negro graduate nurses. The Negroes are especially fitted for this work and we have many Negroes in the service who are entitled to have nurses of their own race attend them when they are so readily available. It seems foolish to use the excuse that there are no facilities for such nurses. Likewise, it was argued by those who opposed the drafting of male nurses that they had not had training in certain special lines which had been offered in the courses of training for female nurses. Someone suggested that one of the courses not offered to male nurses which was offered to female nurses in their training course is that of obstetrics. How foolish such arguments and how inapplicable to the issue!

The Army could easily relax its rigid requirements and restrictions, admit those who lack an inch or two of the height required for nurses, or who are a few pounds underweight or overweight, and take in this vast army of volunteer nurses who are available, and let them go to the bedsides of our wounded soldiers. The American way suggests that we do not permit the drafting of this self-sacrificing element of our population, simply because somebody has misjudged, miscalculated, bungled, or otherwise failed to follow the American method and obtain the nursing quota now said to be required. It is not a question of condemning but it is a question of saying to any branch of our Government that our freedom-loving citizens insist that they be given the facts and be allowed the privilege of volunteering their

services for the good of our country, rather than that they be drafted. Most of all, we should apply this to our daughters and our sisters who have dedicated their lives to the service of disease and sick humanity. We owe them that protection and we should be courageous enough to demand that those in authority respect the ideals of our Government, which will in no way impede the progress of the war nor delay the ultimate victory. No one has criticized the other branches of service for following these time-honored traditions. Why not make it universal?

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The people do not want these angels of mercy drafted. They have not been convinced that it is either right or necessary. Nurses have always responded when duty called. Their lives have been pledged to sacrificial service. They are not slackers, and Congress should not so brand them by enacting a law which will besmirch the fair name of their profession. The followers of Florence Nightingale are entitled to everlasting honor and our highest esteem. They should not be drafted.

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