

Public Must Share Part of Failure of Nurses to Answer Overseas Appeal

By CATHERINE BURKE
THE LAST THING the American public will put up with, we're being told in editorials and by authoritative speakers, is that our sick and wounded boys should suffer because the army and navy cannot find enough women to nurse them.

But what we don't hear often enough, according to the nurses, and the men and women in charge of recruiting them, is that an awkward package of blame can be dropped down smack on the front stoop of that big door plainly marked "American Public."

He doesn't want his girl to enlist because he might get back home all primed to walk down a flower-decked aisle to the tune of the bridal chorus from Lohengrin, only to find that his one-and-only is serving in a hospital overseas, with the army dictating her moves for the duration.

That blame he sometimes shares with parents who hinder their daughters from enlisting.

Capt. Mildred B. Vrana, chief of nurses at Fort Snelling, believes that more civilian physicians can cut down on their nursing staffs, pointing out that there are as many and more nurses employed than in peace time.

"We'd like to see more civilian nurses on duty here at the post," she said, "They wouldn't have to enlist, but they could take care of our patients here, and relieve army nurses for overseas duty."

Marian Backus, Red Cross nurses recruiting service, quotes the Canadian system as a part solution for the nursing shortage here. A patient there isn't admitted to a hospital unless a friend or relative comes to take care of him.

"The need for nurses is so great in hospitals now even in this country, that hospitals with 3,000 patients are running with 60 nurses, and some with 52 wards have only 57 nurses," she said.

"It is a deplorable thing that civilians with plenty of money to spend for it are demanding luxury nursing care, while medical units are being sent overseas without nurses."

That situation means an extra burden on the nurses now spread so thinly over battle areas, as Lt. Stenoien well knows.

In a hospital in Italy where she was stationed they needed three times as many nurses as they had. Wounded were forced to lie on beds of pain unattended and uncared for over long stretches of time. Lives were lost—not from lack of surgery or medical treatment, which by universal testimony is better than any army has ever had in any war—but because devoted nurses, working day and night, could not handle more cases.

"I had a letter recently from a friend overseas, who told me not to expect any more mail from her," the lieutenant said. "She wrote that there was only



Lt. Gudrun E. Stenoien, left, and Capt. Mildred B. Vrana, would like to see civilian nurses relieve army nurses for overseas duty at Fort Snelling hospital. The lieutenant, who was overseas for 20 months, has just received her third battle star for service in the Naples-Foggia campaign. The war department awarded her the bronze star medal for heroic achievement of merit in connection with military operations against the enemy. Capt. Vrana is chief of nurses at Fort Snelling, where Lt. Stenoien is now on duty.

one nurse for 62 patients, and she was too tired to write after caring for them."

In the meantime we are faced with these disquieting figures:

The army needs 10,000 nurses at once, with 250 enlistments a month to take care of replacements. The navy wants 2,500 by July 1, with 150 a month for attrition. The overall figure is 50,000.

Quota for Minnesota by Jan. 3 is 312, but to date only 187 nurses have enlisted.

BUT cadet nurses corps, organized 18 months ago, offers a bright and shining hope for overworked nurses in military hospitals both here and abroad. When these students, and others now training in hospitals all over the country, complete their accelerated courses there will be more volunteers, the army hopes, to care for the men who are in pain, in fever, and in low spirits.

In the meantime, it is these young students who are providing 36 per cent of the nursing care in hospitals all over the nation.

The University of Minnesota, with the largest cadet nurses corps in the country—817—will soon have a bumper crop of graduates. Of the 29 who have already finished the course—they were juniors when they enlisted—four are army nurses, 19 are in essential civilian nursing service, one is taking graduate nursing, and one dropped out of the course. No check was kept on the first three who finished the course before July 1, 1944.

It is the older women—the

hidden nurses—who have already had nurses training to whom the army issues an urgent appeal.

But these civilian nurses, under considerable pressure of one kind or another, not the least important being the fact that they can make a good deal more money by caring for patients who will and do pay high prices, have been slow to volunteer.

About two months ago 27,000 nurses who were declared to be not engaged in essential civilian nursing were urged to enlist if they could pass the physical examinations. Of these 27,000 women, only 750 answered the army's appeal, and only 227 signed up.

Lutheran Women to Have Luncheon

Mrs. Conrad Thorp and Mrs. H. S. Stenson will be hostesses at a luncheon meeting at 1 p.m. Thursday of the Women's Guild of Bethlehem Lutheran church in the church parlors.

Dr. O. S. Reigstad will be guest speaker. Musical selections will be presented by a vocal trio including Mmes. T. G. Oveson, Viola Gernaas and M. T. Lundblad.

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