

Much to Learn from other Associations

by Mary Das

A day spent in the office of the Swedish Nurses Association was rewarding. After studying the work of the Association I felt that there is much the TNAI can learn from other professional Associations. The Executive Secretary Miss Gunborg Bergkvist patiently answered all my questions.

The executive function of the Association is vested in the Central Board of Directors. There are two Councils which function as Advisory Bodies to the Board; the Council of Chairmen and the Confidence Council. They meet at any time according to the desire of the Central Board of Directors.

When the Swedish Nurses Association was founded in 1919 its objectives were confined to the improvement of nursing education and nursing services. A few years later some nurses felt the Association should also take up the cause of improved working conditions for nurses although the opinion was divided. Ultimately in 1933 the Association decided to work also for the welfare of nurses. This decision proved a boon in 1936 when a law came into force which gave opportunity to the employees to negotiate with the employers. Miss Gesda Hojer, the then Executive Secretary went around to different employers to negotiate a rise in salaries for nurses, and was almost successful. Later the Hospitals formed a federation of employers which made it easy for the Association to negotiate the working conditions of all nurses.

The Central Board of Directors has seven members and four deputies elected by the representative assembly consisting of 120 members representing 22 local branches.

There are 27 branches of the Association, one in each country. One country is divided into two branches and each branch is divided into cities. The membership of

branches varies from 200 to 4000. The branches with less than 200 members have the right to send only one member and its President to the assembly. The remaining seats in the representative assembly are divided according to the number of members in each branch. The representative assembly, the decision making body of the association, meets every second year.

The Central Board of Directors are elected by the assembly. This board is vested with the powers to make decisions in between assembly meetings. The Board meets every month except in July which is the holiday month for this country.

The Council of Chairmen consists of the Branch Presidents. It meets in the year in which there is no assembly meeting and function as an advisory body.

The Confidence Council which also functions as advisory body consists of the Chairman of local Branches, Central Board of Direc-



Mrs. Gerd Zetterstrom Lagervall,
President, Swedish Nurses Association

tors, Chairman of different sections of association such as teachers, administrators, public health nurses, laboratory nurses, operation theatre nurses etc. which meets between Assembly meetings.

The President of the Association is elected by the nurses at the general assembly. She is a paid employee of the Association and functions as the Chief Administrator at the headquarters. At present Mrs. Gerd Zetterstrom Lagervall is the President.

Of the 46,000 registered nurses in Sweden about 85 per cent are members of the Association. The Swedish Nurses Association was affiliated to ICN in 1929. There is no system of life membership in the Association. The annual membership fee is 300 kronors (Rs. 375 approx) for the nurses in practice and part-time nurse get 50 per cent concession. Retired nurses and student nurses pay only 25 kronors per year. The student nurses have no voting right.

Nurses from other countries employed in Sweden are given associate membership. They are required to pay 160 kronors per year. The Association also takes up the problems of foreign nurses in Sweden and looks after their welfare. The association is also a member of the Federation of Salaried Employees, in Hospitals and Public Health Services which belong to a Central Organisation of salaried employees. This is the largest Central organisation in Sweden consisting of the engineers, lawyers, teachers, police, nurses etc. Among the benefits for such affiliation are matters of common interest in economic, social and local matters, strength for collective bargaining, research and investigations, creation of public opinions and informational and educational activities.

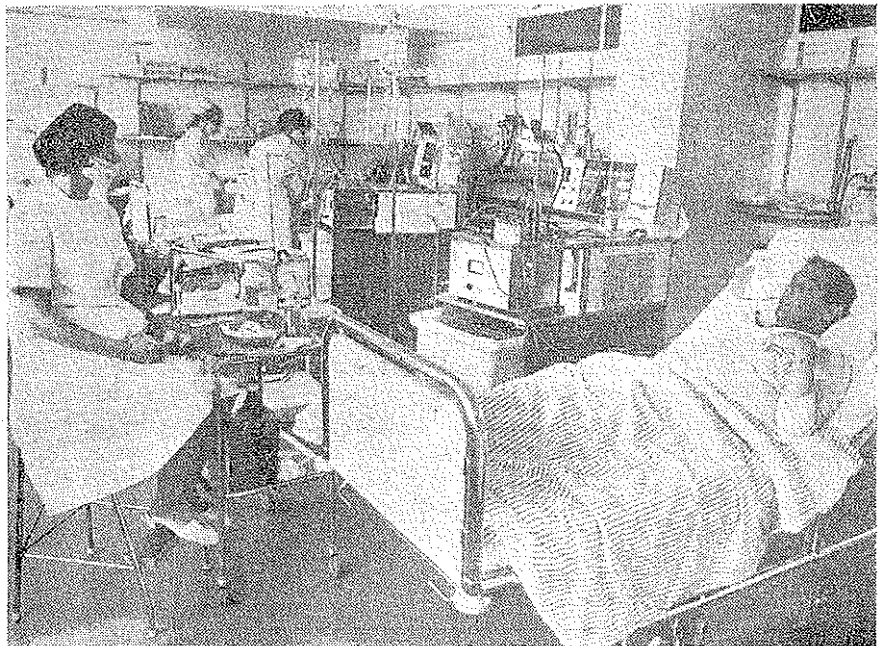
The headquarters of the Swedish Nurses Association has 50 to 60 members on the staff. They include the President, the Executive Secretary, 20 registered Nurses, 3 Journalists and other staff, in addition thereto a part-time lawyer is also engaged. Visiting the large headquarters especially of the As-

sociation my thoughts went back to the TNAJ headquarters and I felt that we are expecting too much from the small number of staff employed there.

FINLAND

To Finland I arrived from England which was a change. But a peep into the nursing world was a contrast. While in England there is allround effort to attract women into the nursing profession to overcome the acute shortage of nurses, in her neighbouring country, Finland, there was unemployment of qualified nurses. There nursing is the second most popular profession for women. This country had even to restrict recruitment in the nursing school because of the surplus trained nurses. Only 1/3 of the total applicants get admission to nursing schools. The Finland nurse proudly say "we have no shortage of nurses while everywhere in the world there is cry about trained nurses". In Finland there are many avenues of employment for women. To my question a senior nurse replied "Women in our country do everything except driving the railway engine."

I posed for a moment and wondered how there are only limited opportunities in our country for women.



A patient in Dialysis at the Intensive care unit of the Helsinki University Hospital.

Student nurses in Finland enjoy full student status. Nursing education is under the National Board of Vocational and Professional Education. The nurse teacher is responsible for the entire programme both in the nursing and in the teaching fields. She works in collaboration with the Public Health

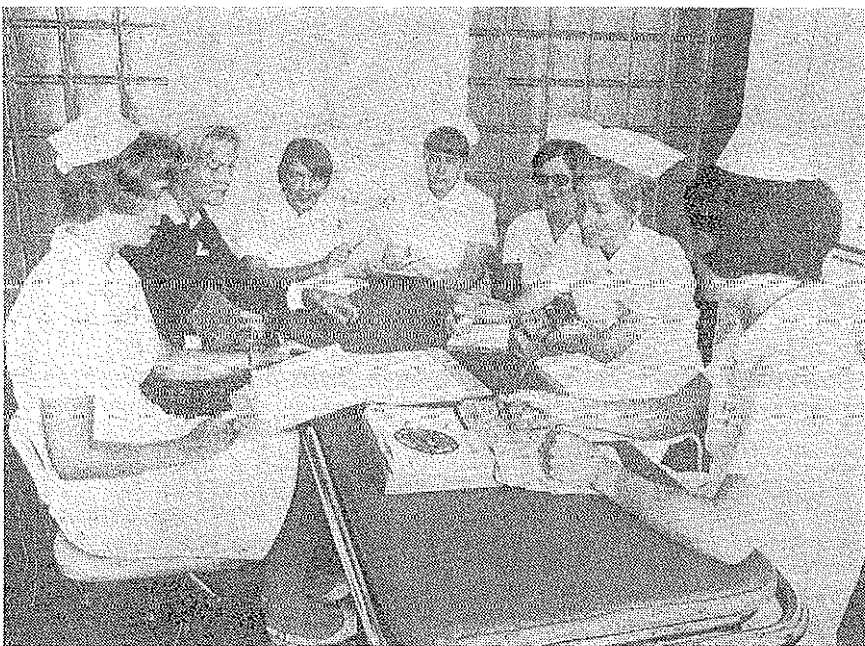
Nurses and Ward Sisters who supervise the students in the field. The Public Health Nurses and Ward Sisters are rewarded for teaching the student nurses.

Promotion as a Ward Sister depends on the qualification she possesses in the special field. Promotion as Nursing Tutor or Administrator requires further education.

The Helsinki College of Nursing imparts nursing education in basic, post-basic and advance education. Its courses are comprehensive and integrated.

The foundation of nursing education in Finland was laid by Miss Snellman in 1944. She established the foundation with a gift she received from 3300 nurses on her 50th birthday as a token of appreciation for her work in the field of nursing education. The aim of the foundation is to promote nursing education. Its programme includes publication of professional literature, organisation of different nursing activities, grant of scholarships for nursing education and research, promotion of ideas and initiative aiming at the development of nursing education, making available professional literature to nurses and nursing students, raising of funds for the foundation, conduct-

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The Matron of Helsinki University Hospital in session with Head Nurses.