

THEY WANT TO WORK WITH BABIES

But They Train At Their Own Expense

IN *The Listener* of May 12 a letter was published drawing attention to the plight of Karitane nurses, and complaining that the "relics of social snobbery" exclude poorer girls from taking up Karitane nursing. The other side of the case, we are told, is something like this. It is difficult for a girl without means to become a Karitane nurse, but that is one of the last things a girl should wish to become.

"When a poorer girl who can't afford the fees required for Karitane training comes to me, I advise her to do a general training," said one of the senior Plunket nurses, "and when she says 'But I want to work with babies,' I explain that after the General, a nurse can do her Plunket in four months, as against the sixteen months for Karitane, and she is equipped for wider and more varied work and her training is on a broader basis."

Very few girls take up Karitane work as a career, we were told, many just filling in time between school days and marriage, but those who are really keen often continue with general training

afterwards. Karitane is of course an excellent preparation for married life, but there is little scope in it for girls with ambition. The Truby King System, as Plunket and Karitane are known outside New Zealand, gives opportunity for travel to almost any country in the world, but a Karitane nurse is never "in charge," in the sense that she is always working for someone else, and the job is an extremely restless one, as she has no sooner "broken in" one baby than she has to move to another charge. In short, she lives continuously in a suitcase. While actually at Karitane, a trainee's work is not unduly heavy, as she is dealing with babies and not lifting adult patients, but there is sufficient mental work and study to keep her from feeling a lady of leisure.

Four-year Waiting List

In spite of the fees, however, *The Listener* gathered that there is no lack of nurses offering for the training and that there is a four-year waiting list. Before the war they were applying six years ahead. During the first year of the war many of the trained nurses went into other jobs, but Karitane work is now essential. Even so, the demand exceeds



"The value of Karitane services has sky-rocketed"

the supply to an amazing extent, and only about one-tenth of the requests can be fulfilled. Of course this is partly due to the fact that with the introduction of Social Security more homes are now able to afford assistance, and the scarcity of domestic help has sky-rocketed the value of a Karitane nurse's services.

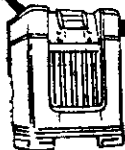
At present there are six Karitane hospitals in New Zealand—one in each of the four centres, one in Invercargill and one in Wanganui—but these are not nearly sufficient to train all the nurses required. Had they been given the status of private hospitals, it was suggested to us, the slight fee charged in excess of the Social Security payment

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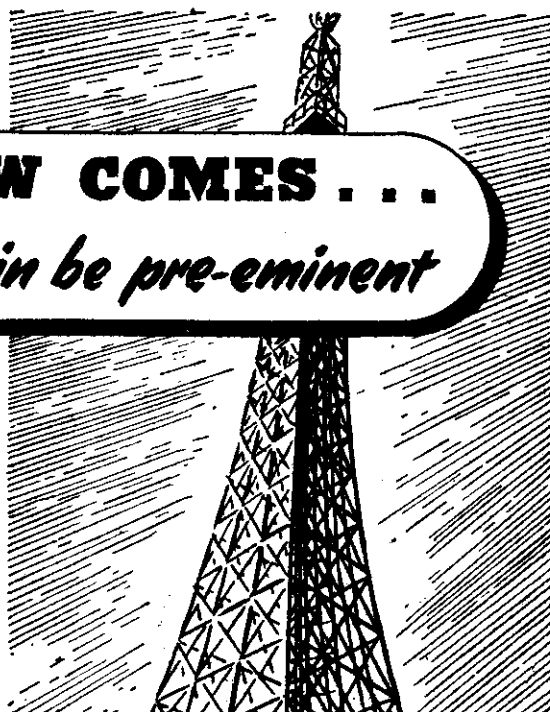
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