

‘Nursing regulation for the last 100 years’

‘A very great advantage’: State regulation of nursing and the General Nursing Council for Ireland, 1920–1950

Gerard Fealy



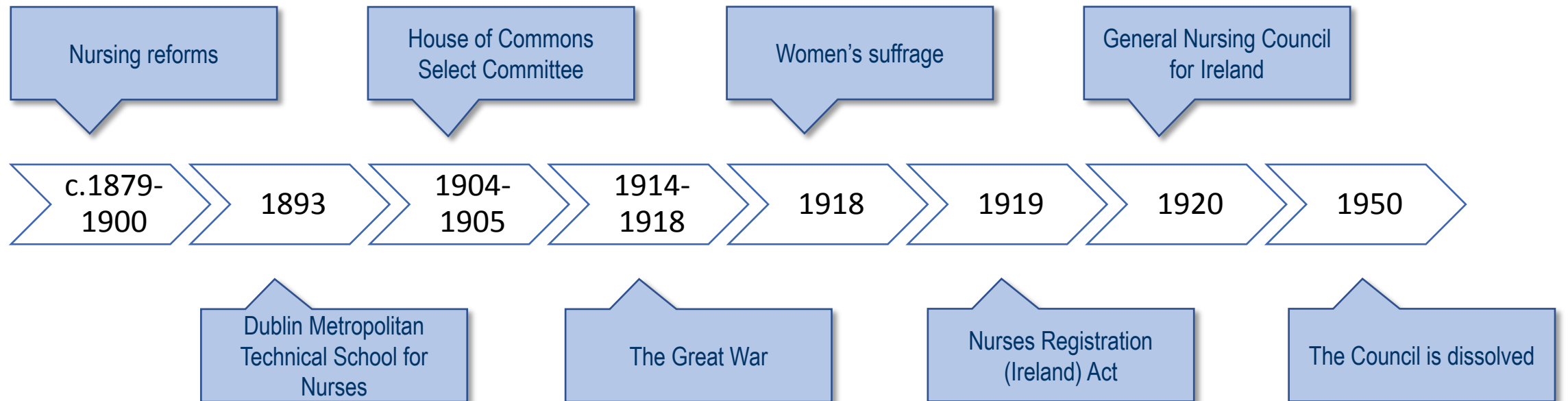
Bord Altranais agus
Cnáimhseachais na hÉireann
Nursing and Midwifery Board
of Ireland



Overview

- Nursing reform and professional regulation of nursing
- The General Nursing Council for Ireland and professional regulation
- Challenges and threats to the Council's authority
- Dissolution of the Council

Towards state regulation ...



'Nurses of poor station' ...



Sairy Gamp



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Nurses, Meath Hospital, 1872

Reformed 'lady nurses' ...



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Nurses, Charitable Infirmary Dublin, 1895



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Nurses, Meath Hospital, Dublin, 1892

Nursing reforms, c.1879-1900

- Developments in hospital scientific medicine and reports of unsatisfactory nursing arrangements are key drivers of reform
- An Anglican-social reform movement that introduces systematic training and establishes nursing as a secular-professional occupation for middle-class ladies
- Reforms led by lady superintendents: 'Genial and accomplished ladies, with the cordiality and happy manner of Irish country gentlewomen.'



Adelaide Hospital (1858)

Red Cross House and Training School (1884)

The Charitable Infirmary (1891)

Mater Misericordiae Hospital (1891)

Dublin Nurses' Training Institution (Holles St) (1866)

City of Dublin Training Institution (1884)

St Vincent's Hospital (1892)

Dublin Metropolitan Technical School (1893)

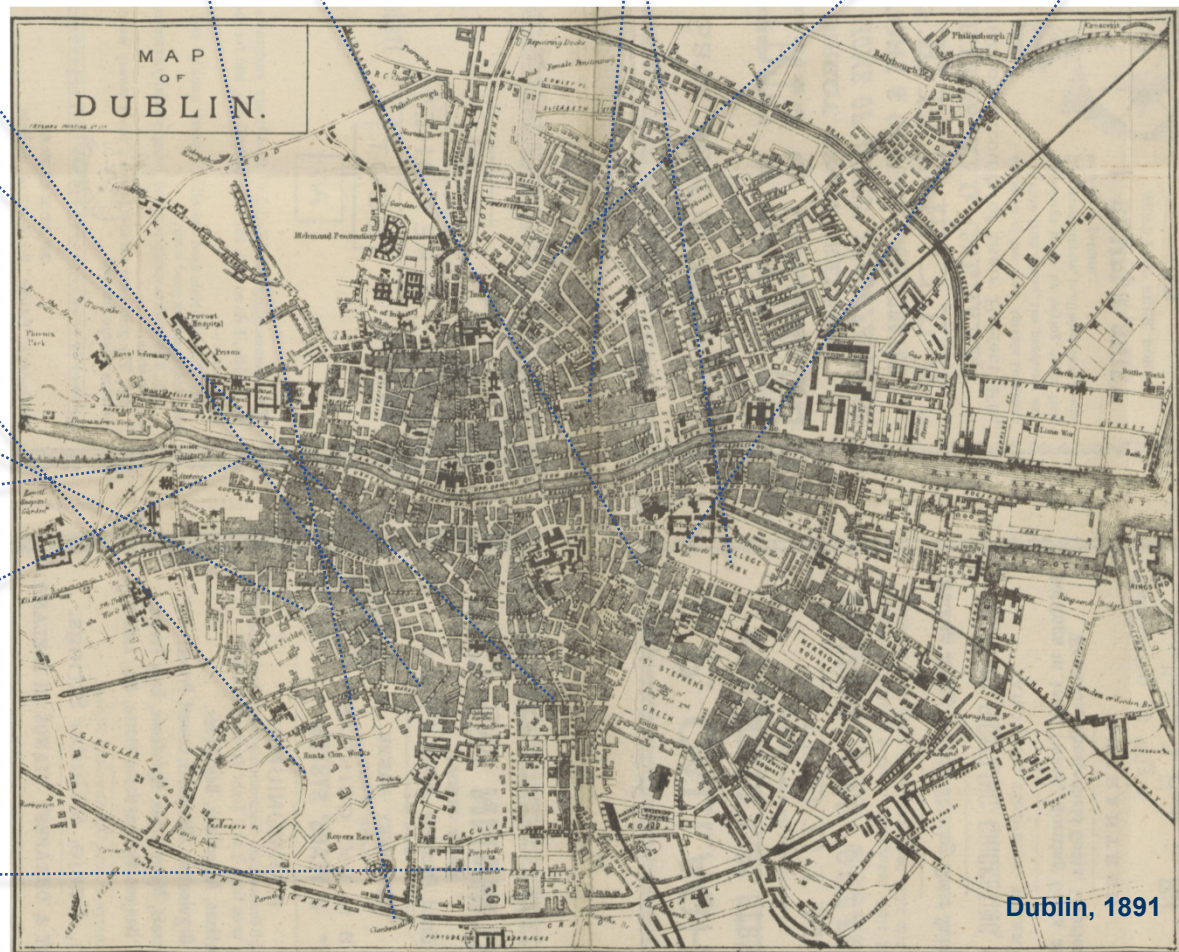
Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital (1866)

St Patrick's Home (1876)

Dr Steevens Hospital (1879)

Dublin Nurses' Training Institution (Usher's Quay) (1882)

Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital (1883)



Dublin, 1891

The case for state registration

'[State registration] would allow the public to ascertain for themselves whether they were having a fully trained nurse or not ... [and] it would be a very great advantage to the fully trained nurse, that a line should be drawn between herself and the half trained nurse.'

(Miss Isla Stewart, Evidence to House of Commons *Select Committee on the Registration of Nurses*, 1904-05)



Miss Isla Stewart, St Bartholomew's Hospital

The case for state registration

[A General Nursing Council would] 'lay down the conditions of examination ... provide examiners to carry on a uniform method of examination ... lay down and define the term of training and what the education should be ... [and] compel the hospitals to give a systematic training ...

If you do not educate your nurse, in the end the public must suffer.'

(Miss Margaret Huxley, Evidence to House of Commons *Select Committee on the Registration of Nurses*, 1904-05)



Miss Margaret Huxley, Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital

The case against state registration

Nightingale believed that the personal and moral qualities, so necessary for sick nursing, could not be examined by the State

'[The School Matron is] primarily responsible for the conduct and efficiency of the Nurses' (Nightingale, cited in Baly 1973)



Miss Nightingale

The Select Committee concludes ...

[State] registration is rendered requisite by reason of the amount of illegality, immorality and scandal which at present continues undiscovered and unchecked. It is contended that registration would be an efficient instrument against these scandals and would safeguard the public.

(Select Committee on the Registration of Nurses together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index. HC London: HMSO, 1904 (281) vi.701 and 1905 (263) vii. 301: iii, p. 18).



Palace of Westminster, c. 1910

State regulation is achieved ...

'After a long struggle, State recognition has been granted to us, and now we hope, with an official register, our conditions will be brought into line, and both the medical profession and the public will have the means of knowing whether the nurse employed by them is what she represents herself to be – surely a decided advantage to all; and more than this, we hope and expect to be of service to the Minister of Health in his efforts to improve the standard of health of the nation.

M. Huxley, 'The Nurse and the State'. *Address to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, 1920, p. 53.

The Nurses Registration (Ireland) Act 1919

'We may congratulate ourselves that our determination in the past was a strong factor in the framing of this broadly-conceived Act' (Margaret Huxley 1920)

The British Journal of Nursing. *February 7, 1920*

MISS HUXLEY ENTERTAINS THE IRISH MATRONS' ASSOCIATION.

REJOICINGS IN DUBLIN.

A successful and very pleasant function was the dinner given by Miss Huxley, the pioneer of Irish Nursing, to the members of the Irish Matrons' Association, on Tuesday, January 27th, to celebrate the passing of the Nurses' Registration Act. A goodly company assembled at the Bonne Bouche Restaurant, Dawson Street, Dublin, and were received by the hostess of the evening.

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Margaret Huxley, member of the first Council and Rules Committee



Alice Reeves, member of the first Council member and Rules Committee



Senator Sir Edward Coey Bigger, First GNCI Chairman

The General Nursing Council for Ireland ...

The first State regulatory body for nursing in Ireland

The members present at the first Council included nine nurses and six medical and lay members

The Council draws up Rules for ...

- the conduct of the Council's business
- the formation, maintenance and publication of the Register of Nurses
- the admission of nurses to the Register, including 'existing nurses'*
- the approval of hospitals as training schools

*nurses who had 'bona fide engaged in approved practice as nurses in attendance of the sick' for a minimum period of three years and had at least one year's training in a recognised hospital.

The formation, maintenance and publication of the Register of Nurses

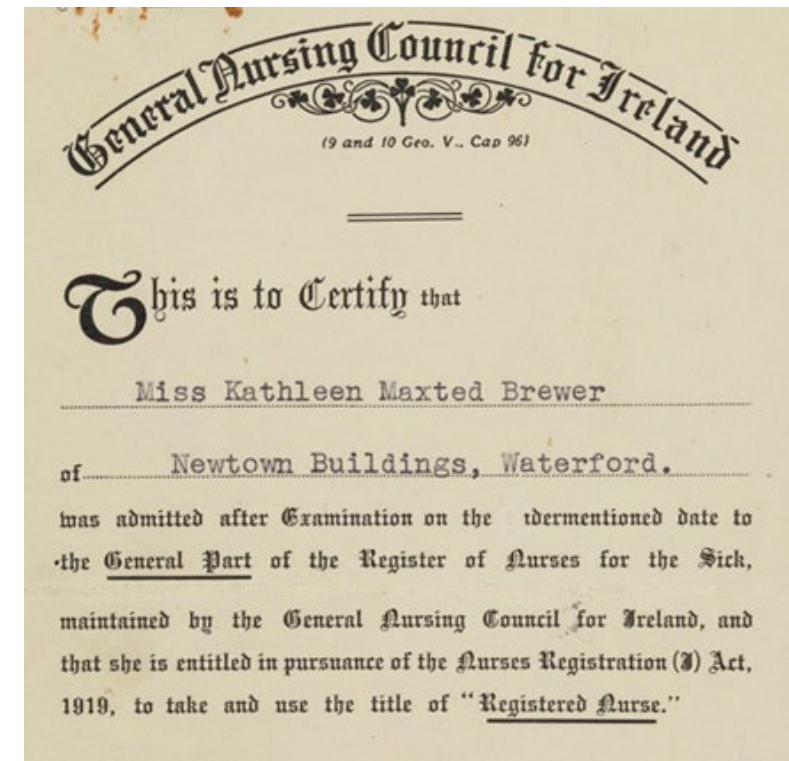
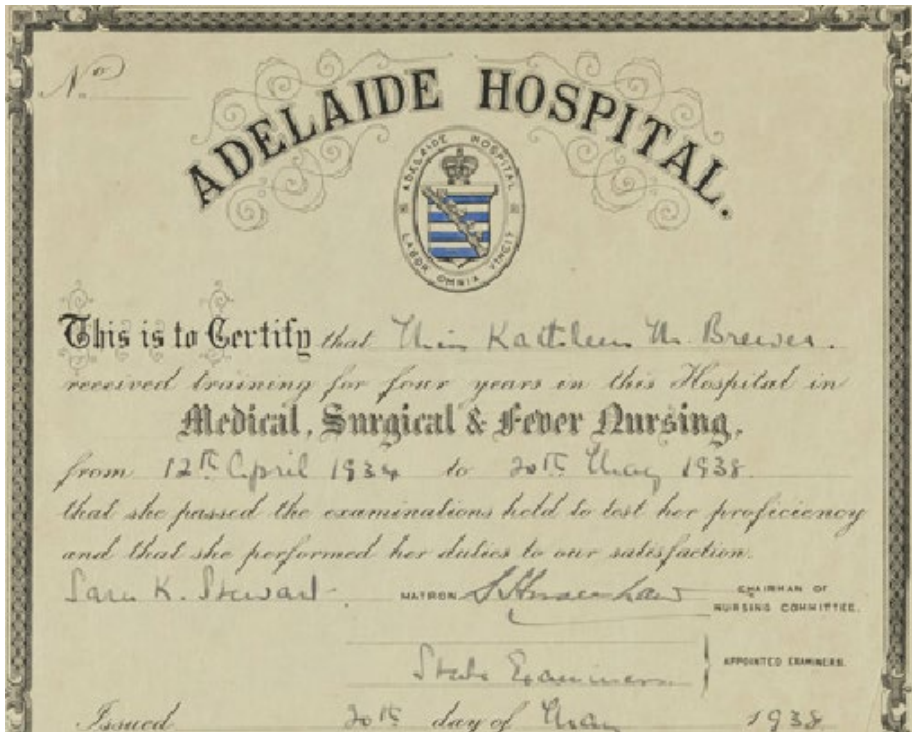
The Council was initially concerned that nurses had not registered in the expected numbers, due to a fear on the part of nurses that registration under an Act of the Westminster Parliament did not have the sanction of the Free State Government

Numbers entered on the Register and supplementary parts						
Year	General	Fever	Mental	Sick Children	Male	Total
1923	2,500	20	750	17		3,287
1934	5,230	241	907	72	3	6,453
1937	6,105	387	1,480	101		8,073

The formation, maintenance and publication of the Register of Nurses

'Existing nurses have registered in quite satisfactory numbers, I believe between three and four thousand up to the present time. Hospital Governors have been most willing to conform to the Regulation laid down in the Act and the Government Departments demand that their nursing appointments shall be filled by nurses whose names are on the Register. This is all to the good and in my opinion can only make for betterment and efficiency, which will be more and more apparent as time goes on (Margaret Huxley 1925). Anon., BJNI, March 1925, p. 24.

The formation, maintenance and publication of the Register of Nurses



Male nurses

In the lifetime of the Council, just **11 names** were entered onto the Supplementary Register for Male Nurses. Most entered by reciprocity or as existing nurses.

Daniel Riordan (1924), Cork City, Army Council, 1909–1917; first male on the Register

William Henry O'Halloran* (1924), Army Council, 1900–1912

Thomas Hill (1925), Upper Baggot St, Royal Army Medical Corps and Army Council

Patrick Joseph Corcoran* (1935) first male nurse to train in an Irish hospital (South Cork County Hospital)

Patrick Dinane, Cork City, Royal Navy,

Jeremiah O'Sullivan, Royal Australian Navy

Francis Browning, Royal Naval Hospital, Bury St-Edmonds

Edward Joseph Nangle, Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Royal Hospital,

Robert Neville, the City Hospital, York, and

Joseph Fitzgerald, City of Cork General Hospital, 1947–1950.

*O'Halloran and Corcoran entered after examination

Challenges: The Royal Medico-Psychological Association of Ireland ...

- The Royal Medico-Psychological Association (RMPA) was the professional representative body for psychiatrists in the United Kingdom and Ireland
- Following the establishment of the General Nursing Council for Ireland, the RMPA sought to retain its control over the training and examination of mental nurses, by seeking to remain the examining body for mental nurses
- Some mental hospitals continued to appoint persons who did not have certificates of training. In 1927 the Council called on 'the Local Government Department [to] take steps to see that registered nurses are not passed over for promotion by nurses holding the Certificate of the Medico-Psychological Association.'
- In 1929, the Council again wrote to the Minister for Local Government, calling on him to take steps to ensure that 'no persons be placed on the permanent staff [of a mental institution] unless they be fully trained and registered.'



Challenges: The Royal Medico-Psychological Association of Ireland...

- In 1928, the Council accepted RMPA examinations as a basis for registration of mental nurses; however, in 1930, the Council heard reports of irregularities in the conduct of RMPA examinations (some candidates were advised that they passed RMPA examinations and were subsequently advised that they had failed)
- In 1934, the GNC for England and Wales refused to recognise the qualification of nurses examined by the RMPA. The Irish Council was similarly determined to proceed with conducting its own registration examinations in mental nursing
- The RMPA continued to insist that it should be the examining authority for mental nurses in the Irish Free State. In the face of this standoff, the Council advised the RMPA that in order to retain its control of examinations and its conditions of reciprocity with other councils, it could not 'allocate its function to an outside body'
- In 1936 the Council approved revisions to its Syllabus of Examination for Mental Nursing in March 1936.



Challenges: The Royal Medico-Psychological Association of Ireland...

- The RMPA engaged in a prolonged power struggle with the Council.
- In the end, the Council prevailed, because it had the force of law and the resolve of its Council members to ensure that its statutory powers of state regulation of nurses were fully enforced

**Handbook for
the instruction
of attendants
on the insane
Royal Medico-
psychological
Association**

Approval of hospitals as training schools: Complete and affiliated training schools...

Gaining approval as a training school, either **complete** or **affiliated**, could greatly enhance the reputation of hospitals, including enhance their ability to recruit and retain staff. On that basis, the Council received numerous applications for affiliated status from smaller hospitals throughout the country. (e.g. Hume Street Hospital and Mercers Hospital; Wexford County Hospital and the Mercy Hospital Tralee; the Drumcondra Hospital and the Meath Hospital; St Mary's Open-air Hospital, Cappagh with Dr Steevens Hospital).



Dr Steevens Hospital, Dublin (a complete (final) training school)



St Mary's Open-air Hospital (an affiliated training school)

Challenges: Council survey of complete and affiliated training schools...

In the majority of cases the questionnaire was inadequate; in many cases evasive and misleading; and with a few exceptions generally unsatisfactory. The great majority did not, as requested, supply details of the lectures and by whom given. Some who did showed that they were unaware of the course prescribed by the syllabus. One showed that the surgeon devoted eight hours weekly to lecturing the nurses, while in direct contrast another showed that the lectures were given entirely by sisters and none by a doctor. Four had no skeleton for anatomical lectures. One had no skeleton, no RMO, no model, no lay-figures, made no return of lectures given but charges a premium. One had six trained nurses, sixteen probationers, over 200 beds; an average bed occupancy of 153; i.e. one trained nurse per an average of 25.3 patients ...

MS/GNC/220/117, 11 March 1936, p. 3

Challenges: Amalgamated and affiliated hospitals...

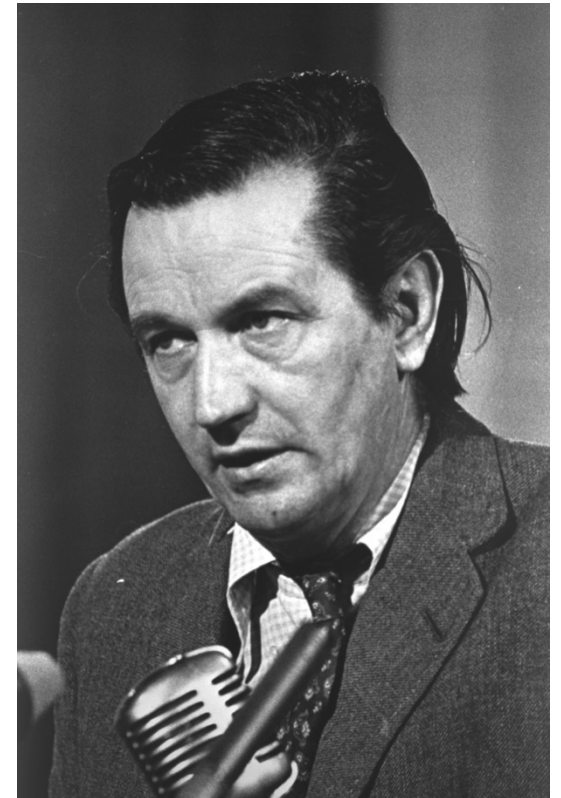
'In a large number of cases [there was] an absence of proper organisation in the matter of training facilities in the hospitals at present recognised by the Council ... some hospitals showed an excellent effort to afford adequate training [others were] 'handicapped by an unfortunate alliance.' MS/GNC/220/117, 11 March 1936, p. 3.

No candidate may be accepted as a probationer in a Preliminary Training School until the Matron of the Final Training School at which the candidate is to complete her training has interviewed the candidate and consented to her being accepted by the Preliminary Training School as a Probationer.' MS/GNC/220/117 7 April 1945.



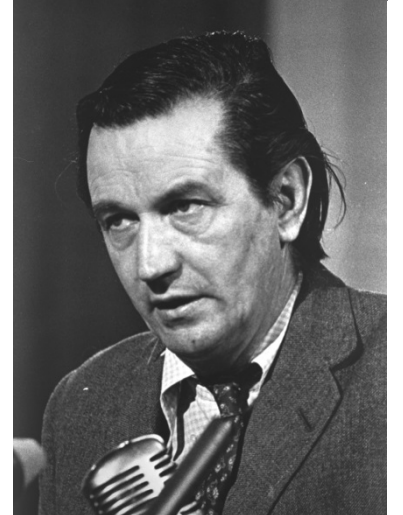
Dissolution of the Council

- Noël Browne, Minister for Health (1948 –1951) argued that 'the value of any health service depends largely on the efficiency of its personnel'
- In reviewing the 1919 Act, Browne foresaw the establishment of a new regulatory authority for nursing and midwifery, one that would subsume the functions of the General Nursing Council for Ireland and the Central Midwives Board for Ireland, into a single body, and thereby act to impose greater control over the recruitment, training and employment of nurses and midwives
- Browne argued that combining the two regulatory bodies into a single new authority would 'facilitate the integration of the different branches of the nursing profession' and would provide a steady flow of nurses and midwives that would be needed for the services



Dissolution of the Council

- A new regulatory authority for nurses and midwives would represent a 'unifying process' that would provide the necessary revitalisation of the professions and a more flexible approach to the training of nurses (James Deeney, Chief Medical Advisor, Department of Health 1949)
- Minister Browne publishes the Nurses Bill 1949, which proposed a new regulatory body, An Bord Altranais (the Nursing Board), which would be responsible training nurses and midwives and it should have national oversight of the country's needs for a nursing service. The new Board would play a more active role in developing and delivering training programmes for nurses and midwives and would be empowered to initiate and be responsible for special training courses in areas such as 'district health' and the training of nurse teachers.
- The Nurses Act 1950 establishes An Bord Altranais



Conclusions

- In its Rules and procedures, the General Nursing Council for Ireland established the essential architecture of a regulated profession
- The Council experienced challenges and threats to its authority as a State regulator of nursing
- Despite many challenges to its authority, the Council succeeded in creating and consolidating the essential elements of state registration and set nursing in Ireland on the path to become the modern profession that it is today

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