

EDITORIAL

As all members of the South African Society of Physiotherapy are now aware we are determined to succeed in the task of obtaining legislation for state recognition by means of a Public Bill through Parliament. Over a period of 35 years this task has been attempted time and again, but always meeting with failure for some reason or other. We are launching out again on this EPIC STRUGGLE and this time we mean to succeed.

The Central Executive Action Committee has circularized all Branches and is planning a National Campaign to this end.

As long ago as 1927 three founder members of the newly formed South African Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics interviewed Members of Parliament and the Minister of Health with a view to obtaining registration with the South African Medical and Dental Council under the proposed Medical and Dental and Pharmacy Act. It was not until ten years later, however, that the principle of compulsory registration was formerly adopted by the South African Society of Physiotherapy.

In 1938 the S.A.S.P. which had recently been formed, petitioned the Minister of Health to institute a compulsory register for Masseurs and Physiotherapists and concurrently the South African Medical and Dental Council was petitioned to support our request. Then followed various deputations to the Minister of Health who expressed himself in favour of compulsory registration, but little actually came of these interviews until in 1943 a new register for Medical Auxiliaries was opened by the South African Medical and Dental Council. The Physiotherapy Society was invited to act in an advisory capacity. This was most significant as it was the first official recognition of the Society.

During the next few years the Government intimated that it was prepared to proceed with a Bill for Compulsory Registration but for one reason or another the matter was always shelved or the Bill passed over.

By 1947 the proposed Bill was definitely gazetted at last, but immediately withdrawn by the Government because of strong opposition from members of the newly founded Health Freedom Society who had gained tremendous publicity and popularity.

At the same time Dr. E. B. Woolf attempted to introduce a Bill to protect Medical Auxiliaries, to give the public the advantage of knowing which Auxiliaries were of scientific basis and protecting it against malpractice. This noble effort also failed.

With the change of Government in 1948 there was no pressure from the South African Society of Physiotherapy for a few years.

The late Dr. Karl Bremer took us under his wing in 1951 and he introduced into Parliament a Bill for Compulsory Registration of Supplementary

Health Services. Dr. Bremer showed tremendous interest in this Bill and put a great deal of effort into making it succeed. The Bill passed through two readings and went forward to a select committee, but, sadly, Dr. Bremer died suddenly and the Bill was once more dropped.

The South African Society of Physiotherapy again started on the epic struggle in 1953 but again we met with opposition and disappointment. At one point it was considered that if we introduced a Private Bill to regulate Physiotherapists only we might be more successful; but this proved unpopular and impractical.

Not until 1961 did an opportune moment present itself for the re-introduction of the original Health Services Bill. The opportunity arose and we mean to take every advantage to press for Legislation.

Various channels have been explored, meetings held in Johannesburg, Pretoria and elsewhere with influential speakers including Prof. Dart (National President of the Physiotherapy Society), and representatives of the Medical Association.

It is planned to introduce the Bill essentially the same in principle as in 1952. This provides for:

1. The establishment of Committees in each Group.
2. The keeping of a Register for certain Medical Auxiliaries.
3. The prohibition of practice by unregistered persons.

At this point it might be as well to consider the benefits of Compulsory Registration:

1. Protection of the names—Masseuse and Physiotherapist.
2. Medical Practitioners will be required to refer a patient to registered Physiotherapists only.
3. The Public and the Medical Profession will be assured that they are dealing with properly qualified Physiotherapists only.

To achieve our aim of Compulsory Registration much time and thought has been expended and much more will have to be expended before we succeed. Every effort is being made to stimulate interest in the South African Society of Physiotherapy both amongst the lay public and in the medical world. A Central Action Committee has been formed as well as Branch Action Committees which are starting the National Campaign for Compulsory Registration. Ministers are to be interviewed; the Society is to have much professional publicity and now a News Letter is being produced which will go into circulation shortly informing the public about our Society and our work.

COMPULSORY REGISTRATION IS ON ITS WAY.

Please support your Committee's efforts.