

FSAW C 4.6

The Federation of S.A. Women protests against the present practice of requiring nurses to produce identity numbers for professional registration. It is clear that this is a device by the S.A. Government not only to force African nurses to accept the hated reference books, but also to force identity cards upon the whole profession.

Confronted by the general public reluctance to accept identity cards and the open resentment of African women towards reference books, this Government now seeks more subtle means to enforce its will. The nursing profession, so universally honoured, is the first victim, but other professions should take note. Shall we one day behold the spectacle of the university graduation ceremony at which the diploma, the degree, the doctorate will be bestowed only upon production of an identity card or a pass? Or will the doctor or the nurse, hastening to the desperately ill patient be arrested for inability to produce a pass or an identity card? For that is where this attack upon the nursing profession must lead.

Nor is this a matter for nurses alone. It is the African nurse who is attacked today and one is faced with a terrible choice. If she is to produce her identity number for registration so that she may practice her profession and minister to the sick, this can only be by accepting a reference book and must the African nurse, the woman of education to who her less fortunate sisters look for a lead, become the first to accept a pass and betray not only her fellow nurses but all African women. For here in Johannesburg, on the Reef and in the Union's cities and larger towns, Verwoerd has not yet dared to send his pass issuing units for fear of the organised opposition of women, but has devised this vicious trick to reduce the African nurses to set the shameful example to other women. The South African Nursing Council moreover has allowed itself to be the tool of the Nationalist government, has allowed the noble profession of nursing to be exploited for political ends.

The Federation of S.A. Women maintains that this requirement

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