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WOMEN POLICE IN GREAT BRITAIN.

ENGLAND.

FOR many years past the majority of social workers have ardently desired the employment on police duties in every district of the United Kingdom of one or more women. For women understand the psychology of their own sex better than any man can ever do, and are thus better qualified to deal with the young girl who is on the verge of taking the wrong path in life, as well as with those others who have already done so.

Origin of the Patrol Movement.

It was about the year 1902 that the first recorded appointment of a policewoman was made, and this was in Germany.

In England spasmodic efforts to secure the official appointment of women police had for some time existed, but had met with scant sympathy from the authorities concerned, and it was not until after the outbreak of war that the way for this much-needed reform was first opened up.

In the opening weeks of the war there was much natural excitement, greatly intensified by the turmoil of mobilization and the gathering together of great numbers of young men and boys in large camps in every locality. The normal daily life of the entire community was dislocated, and in spite of the grave cause of the dislocation there was somewhat of a holiday feeling in the air, which was charged, nevertheless, with a strange emotionalism far easier to recall than either to describe or explain.

Possibly the British dislike of the exhibition in public of any tense emotion led to a compromise which allowed of public shouting and laughter to hide private apprehensions and tears; whatever the reason, a wholesale degradation of public manners set in, and "the flapper" and her like became a phenomenon. In peace a more healthy tone in public opinion would soon have asserted itself, but in the conditions of the time the corruption of taste and manners spread quickly to morals, and the authorities were frankly at a loss, and much worried and bewildered by so unexpected a result of warlike preparations.

At this distance of time, there is perhaps a tendency to forget that, when the withdrawal of men and more men to the Front left the regular machinery of the country in peril of collapse from lack of the usual support from within, it was women, through their established organisations, who staved off that disaster by manning the vacant posts with numberless women—who were told at the time that they served the country in this emergency extremely well.

The danger arising from the uncontrolled excitement which possessed much of the girlhood and womanhood of the country was realised by women's organisations, who resolved to take the initiative and do what they could to stem the tide in time.

The National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland was amongst those who took steps to grapple with the dangers, and, after consideration of various suggestions received through its Rescue and Preventive Committee under the Chairmanship of Mrs. James Gow, the Council appointed an *ad hoc* Committee, under the Chairmanship of Mrs. Creighton, upon which a very large number of Societies engaged in moral and social welfare were represented.

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International Bureau for the
suppression of traffic in women

The representative of the National Vigilance Association was the late Mr. Alexander Coote, the greatest authority then living on this class of question. Mr. Coote's advice and assistance were of untold value to the Committee, and being well-known and fully trusted at the Home Office and Scotland Yard, his presence on the Committee added weight to the representations which were made in those quarters. Another valued member was Miss Nora Hall, head of the Out-Door Rescue and Preventive Work of the Church Army. Her knowledge of the state of the streets, and how best to deal with the problems encountered there, helped the Committee enormously.

The Committee met almost daily, and after anxious deliberation it was decided to organise a body of voluntary workers to be called "Women Patrols." They were to be neither detectives nor rescue workers, though their mission partook of the nature of both; they were to be more like experimental policewomen—as indeed they ultimately proved to be.

The original idea was to organise Women Special Constables on the same lines as male Special Constables when they are employed to meet an emergency; to this, however, the Home Secretary would not consent, but he gave the Women Patrols his full official recognition. The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis was then Sir Edward Henry, who was approached, and who promised to give his most cordial support to the scheme. As evidence of his official recognition of the force Sir Edward Henry signed cards directing the police to give the Women Patrols every assistance in their work, and each of the women carried one of these signed cards when on duty.

Outside the Metropolitan area similar cards were signed by the Chief Constables concerned, and formal official recognition of the Patrols was gladly given by successive War Ministers, First Lords of the Admiralty, Officers in Command of Military Districts, and competent authorities throughout the kingdom.

As a first step towards getting the Women Patrols to work, the Committee engaged 26 organisers to give such training as was possible in so short a time. These organisers had themselves to receive special training, for, though they were already trained social workers, this was quite new pioneer work, and it was of vast importance to ensure that it was well organised on pre-determined and properly thought-out lines.

Again Mr. Coote came to the assistance of the Committee. He suggested a series of lectures, which were arranged to adumbrate the work and give the organisers a clear and comprehensive view of the objects and scope of the proposed patrol work. These lectures were given by Mrs. Creighton, Mrs. James Gow, Miss Hall, Mr. Coote and other members of the Committee, thus enabling the organisers to give the Patrols a sound conception of the ideals to be aimed at, the perils to be avoided, and the best methods of dealing with the problems of the streets and open spaces.

Funds became a necessity, and public generosity came to the assistance of the National Council of Women, most liberally, with money gladly given if only the evil could be stayed.

*Police - untold value
HV 7457 (12)*

Work was started by the first organiser on 27th October, 1914, and from first to last between 4,000 and 5,000 voluntary women patrols were enrolled and instructed in the duties they were called upon to perform.

These duties were often dull and monotonous, and always fatiguing in the extreme. The only reward was the knowledge of results achieved; no praise can be too high for the unselfishness of the splendid work done by the Voluntary Women Patrols.

Sir Edward Henry directed that the most careful and minute observation should be made of the methods of work of these women in 1916. As the result of the reports that he received he employed eight Women Patrols to investigate and report to him upon conduct at cinemas in the Metropolitan District.

The Police Factories (Miscellaneous) Act of 1916 enabled the Commissioner to pay the selected patrols out of the Police Fund. Following on the success of their work, 30 more women were officially employed to patrol Hyde Park and other open spaces. These "Special Women Patrols," as they were called, worked under a Supervisor appointed by the National Council of Women, but paid out of the Police Fund. To distinguish them from the purely voluntary women patrols the Commissioner granted them the use of the official police armlet to be worn when on duty.

Thus, it was by Sir Edward Henry that the nucleus of the future force of Women Police was created, and it is not surprising to learn that the innovation was made by one whose record, both at home and abroad, as an organiser and re-organiser of Police Forces, marked him out as one of the highest authorities on such questions.

In 1918 Sir Edward Henry was succeeded as Commissioner of Police by Sir Nevil Macready, whose close enquiry into the work of the

women patrols led to the organisation by him, with the consent of the Home Secretary, of a permanent official body of Women Police for the Metropolis.

A very comprehensive scheme of recruiting, selection and training of the Metropolitan Police Women Patrols was drawn up at Scotland Yard and approved at the Home Office, and on the 21st November, 1918, the Order constituting a Division of Women Police Patrols came into operation.

The Division as constituted, consisted of 100 rank and file, 10 Sergeants, an Assistant Superintendent and the Superintendent.

This was the first official body of women police appointed in this country, although a few Chief Constables had already employed police women who were either selected by themselves or drawn from one of the voluntary organisations.

The duties were laid down in some such terms as these:—The principal and primary duties of women patrols consist in dealing with

women and children ill, injured, destitute, homeless, and those who have been the victims of sexual offences, and are believed to be in danger of drifting towards an immoral life, but they may also be employed as follows:—

In keeping observation, making enquiries or detecting offences,

in plain clothes, if necessary, in cases in which females are concerned, such as :—

1. White Slave Traffic and other offences under the Criminal Law Amendment Acts.
2. Disorderly Houses.
3. Betting and Gaming Houses.
4. Licensed Premises.
5. Night Clubs which are frequented by both sexes.
6. Vagrancy Act, such as fortune telling, &c.
7. In conjunction with police in plain clothes detecting pick-pockets.
8. Assisting Officers of the Criminal Investigation Department in suitable cases.
9. In taking statements in cases of alleged criminal assault on females.
10. Assisting constables in taking particulars of ordinary occurrences in the streets.
11. In conveying, or assisting in the conveyance, of women and children to or from hospitals, workhouses, police stations, remand homes, industrial and reformatory schools, infirmaries, &c., also female inebriates to inebriate homes.
12. In watching female prisoners detained in hospital, &c., or females who have attempted suicide.
13. Prostitutes.

The orders which were given to women police with regard to such routine details of their work as entering particulars of cases in pocket books, time cards, saluting, &c., were similar to those given to male constables. Women police were also to be given access to Police Orders, and other official publications.

In fact, except that they were not attested and had not the power of arrest and were not eligible for pensions, the members of the Women Police Division were on much the same footing as the male force. With regard to the scene of their work the various Superintendents reported where in their opinion women patrols could most usefully be employed, and the Woman Superintendent then issued orders to the women to proceed to that district.

The appointment of Women Police for the Metropolis was followed by a good deal of discussion amongst Police Authorities elsewhere, and amongst the various social organisations. The interest in the subject was such that in 1920 the Home Secretary appointed a Committee to examine and report to him upon "the employment of women on police duties."

The Chairman of this Committee was Major Baird (now Sir John Baird), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Home Affairs.

The 1920 Committee.

The Committee began its duties in February, 1920, and issued its Report in August of the same year, having heard evidence from 47 witnesses, including the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, H.M. Inspectors of Constabulary for England and Wales, H.M. Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland, several Chief Constables, representatives of the Police Federations of England and Wales and of Scotland, Home

Office officials, the Woman Superintendent of the Metropolitan Police Women Patrols, six women employed on police duties, representatives of women's organisations, and of the various training schools, and many others interested in the question.

The Report, after analysing the evidence both written and oral given to the Committee, records the views of the members upon special points such as "The Need for Women Police," "The Nature of the Police Work for which Women are suitable," "Status and Powers," "Control and Organisation," "Officering of Police Women," "Inspectorate," "Discipline," "Standard of Pay," &c., &c.

The conclusions arrived at by the Committee upon the whole matter are summed up in these carefully chosen and weighty words :—

"After careful consideration of all the evidence we are of opinion that in thickly populated areas where offences against the laws relating to women and children are not infrequent *there is not only scope but urgent need for the employment of police women.*"

Since this Report, until the appointment of the Home Office Committee which is sitting at the present time, there has been no enquiry held comparable in scope or in respect of the expert evidence placed before it to the full inquiry into all the facts of the case made by Sir John Baird's Committee; the conclusions at which the members of that Committee arrived with unqualified unanimity are therefore the most authoritative pronouncement which has yet been made upon the reality of the need for the employment of police women.

It is true that a diametrically opposite opinion was expressed later by the Committee on National Expenditure under the Chairmanship of Sir Eric Geddes, which reported upon this question (in common with a multitude of other questions affecting national expenditure) in 1922; but, as was subsequently admitted in Parliament, Sir Eric Geddes took no evidence to lead him to his solitary opinion other than that of officials who had been ordered to cut down expenditure at all cost—even their own. In fact it was not an inquiry, but an execution, and the victims were not even afforded an opportunity of speaking in their own defence.

The Geddes Axe.

The Geddes axe fell upon the Women Police Force, but so vigorous was the protest made by women's organisations; so just the cause; and so strong the support of the Women Members of Parliament and many other Members of both Houses, that a remnant of the force—less than 20 per cent. of its numbers, and too weak numerically to be aptly called a force any longer—but still a remnant, was saved.

The Commissioner of Police, even when he had the maximum number of 112 women at his disposal, had to refuse their services to outlying parts of the Metropolitan District because they could not be spared. With a maximum of 20, what can possibly be expected? That they shall purge the Metropolis of its plague-spots to any visible degree or be able to produce evidence of the kind of results which an adequate number of women police could show? Obviously not. Imagine the state of such a small area as, say, the City of London if left to the care of only 20 City police men! Yet the huge area of the Metropolitan Police District is supposed to be the sphere of work of the 20 remaining police women.

The Geddes recommendation that the Metropolitan Police Women Patrols should be disbanded was a measure of economy only, but even as a measure of economy it is questionable whether it can be justified. The prevention of evil is in itself an economy, even at some monetary cost, and police women are less expensive to the Community than evil-doers. That police women do prevent evil is witnessed in these words of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis :—

“ They (women police) have performed the difficult duties allotted to them with keenness and carefulness, and have proved themselves helpful in many directions, but especially in preventing girls and young persons from starting or continuing lives of immorality. The women police have also been employed on duties in connection with the detection of indecency or criminal conduct by males, particularly in relation to children and young persons, when the chances of detection by a male officer might probably have been less.”

On the 1st February, 1923, the following announcement was made by Mr. Bridgeman, Home Secretary :—

“ The women patrols are being sworn in as constables. They will thus have exactly the same standing and powers as male members of the force The term ‘ woman constable ’ will in future be used instead of ‘ woman patrol.’ ”

This change of status was counted a great step forward. The power of arrest gives the women a confidence and a greater sense of responsibility which is of great moral value.

The last available reports give these figures :—35 Police Authorities in England and 2 in Scotland employ women police ; the total number employed is 122, made up of 89 Provincial, 20

The present position. Metropolitan, and 13 Scottish. Some of the steps in the legal development of the police women are these :—

The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, 1919, made the employment of women as police legal. The circulars of March and May, 1921, issued by the Home Office and the Scottish Office respectively, standardised the pay.

The Police Pensions Act, 1921, made police women pensionable and established their position.

The Report of the Baird Committee of 1920 (which extended to the whole country and dealt with the entire subject in organised detail) defined the duties, status and conditions of service of police women.

Once more a Home Office Committee is sitting to consider the whole question in the light of the experience gained by the employment of women police in the last five years.

It is much to be desired that its Report will result in (1) a very large increase in the number of women employed on police duties ; (2) the recommendations of the 1920 Committee being fully brought into force.

Whilst insisting upon the authorities now carrying out in earnest this long-delayed reform, women must also seriously consider the responsibility which rests upon themselves of creating a well-informed and adequate public opinion upon a subject which has not yet been as clearly and strongly apprehended, even by women, as it should be, and they should also do what they can to supply the right kind of women to take up this important and difficult work.

Applicants should be given a wide and comprehensive view of the task in order that it may not be entered upon unwisely or unadvisedly. Character, tact and conscientiousness must be outstanding features in the mental and moral equipment of a police woman. Training in social work, such as that given to their outdoor workers by the Church Army, is of immense value, but the actual police training will, of course, be given under the regulations of the Police Authority.

In face of the commendation given by the Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, of the approbation expressed by H.M. Inspectors of Constabulary for England and Wales in their Reports, and of the Chief Constables in their Reports, it is difficult to see how a modern Police Force which does not include women can be called thoroughly efficient.

Sir Leonard Dunning says in his Report for 1923, “ The advocates for the employment of police women ”—of whom he was undoubtedly one—“ would probably be more successful if they tried to show that the efficiency of the police service would be improved, rather than that the interests of one sex would be better served.”

Now, that is exactly what women are trying to do, and they are able to quote in support of their case such official remarks from Chief Constables as :—

“ Do most useful work preventing boys and girls lapsing into crime ; if this work were not done by police women *it would not be done at all.*”

“ In touch with cases police cannot deal with.”

“ The necessity for police women is undoubted. My one police woman has been a boon to thousands of women and children.”

“ After six years’ practical experience I am fully satisfied that the services of women police are of the greatest value.”

These statements, by themselves, almost suffice to prove that the efficiency of a Police Force is increased by the inclusion of women police.

Let all those who agree with what has been stated here use their best endeavours to make certain the continuance and steady growth in numbers and efficiency of the women police, and thus ensure “ an efficient Police Force.”—M. G. CARDEN, O.B.E., *late Hon. Secretary and Organiser, Women Patrols Committee. Hon. Secretary, Women Police and Women Patrols Committee of the National Council of Women.*

SCOTLAND.

In 1914 the National Council of Women in Scotland started voluntary patrols, and in 1915, through the exertions of the National Vigilance Association of Scotland, the Secretary for Scotland sanctioned the appointment of a female investigation officer in Glasgow to take evidence from children and from female witnesses in cases of criminal assault or indecency.

In 1918 the National Council of Women started the Scottish Training School for Policewomen and Patrols in Glasgow. The object of the School was to secure trained, whole-time, official policewomen in Scotland, to take over and develop the work of the voluntary patrols. Three women were trained in the Autumn of 1918, and two of them worked in Edinburgh for one year for the National Vigilance Association (Scotland). One of these two was the first policewoman to be appointed by the Edinburgh Town Council in 1920. In 1919 Women Police were on the Agenda of the Convention of Royal Burghs, and seven of the largest Scottish towns declared themselves in favour of women police; the Scottish Office issued a Circular allowing the pay of full-time policewomen to be met by the Treasury Grant but declaring that women could not properly be sworn in as constables.

The Scottish Training School considered this unsatisfactory, and their criticisms were justified by the conditions of enrolment issued by the City of Glasgow and City of Edinburgh Police offering poor pay, no powers and no pensions.

The passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act in 1919 legalised the appointment of women as members of police forces, and the Corporation of Glasgow sanctioned the appointment of ten women, but it was not until June, 1924, that the policewomen in Glasgow were sworn in and given the power of arrest.

The Recommendations of the Report of the Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties in 1920 set up a standard of what was required if the service of policewomen was to be of real value to the community, and in Scotland those interested in the movement have worked steadily towards its attainment.

At the present time the only policewomen in Scotland are in Glasgow (10) and Edinburgh (2); that the Glasgow policewomen are proving themselves of value is evident from the appended excerpt from Minute of Watching and Lighting Committee of date 21st March, 1924, approved by the Corporation on 3rd April, 1924:—

“With reference to minute of date 11th June, 1919, agreeing that as an experiment, ten policewomen be appointed to carry out certain duties therein referred to, there was submitted a letter, of date the 19th inst., from the Chief Constable, stating that these policewomen have proved highly satisfactory in their work, and are a necessary part of the Force; and that, to increase their usefulness, the policewomen, as also the female investigation officer, be appointed as members of the Police Force. The Committee, after consideration of the subject-matter, and having regard to the terms of Section 28 of the Police Pensions Act, 1921, which

provides for the pensioning of policewomen, *agreed* to recommend that, subject to the approval of the Secretary for Scotland, the said policewomen and the female investigation officer be appointed members of the Police Force.”

With regard to other Scottish towns employing policewomen, Dundee led the way in the early years of the War with a half-time policewoman. Her position was never clearly defined and the half-time arrangement was unsatisfactory. She resigned in 1922. Valuable work amongst women and girls was done in Ayr by the policewoman, but she also resigned and her work has been in abeyance since 1922. Many Scottish towns have asked for the appointment of policewomen, and it is hoped that one of the recommendations of the Home Office Committee recently sitting may be a definite plan for providing a proportion of policewomen in all large police forces. England and Scotland have worked together for Women Police since 1918 through the National Council of Women. Their policy is identical and the Committee of the National Council of Women dealing with the subject in both countries are in complete agreement as to the required status, duties, and conditions of service of policewomen.—MISS EDITH TANCRED, *Convener, Sub-Committee on Women in Police Administration, Scottish Standing Committee, N.C.W.*

NOTE.—While the foregoing Reports were in Press, the Report of the Departmental Committee referred to on page 6 was issued. The Recommendations of that Committee to Parliament have given great satisfaction to the many supporters of the appointment of Police Women. Among the most important are the recommendations of the appointment of at least the same number of women as were employed before the reduction in 1922; that a woman should be attached to Headquarters to advise the Commissioner of Police on matters connected with the employment of policewomen: that their services should always be used in connection with cases of women and children: that they should receive the same training as men: that the rates of pay and allowances recommended by the Baird Committee should be generally adopted: and that where employed permanently the provisions of the Police Pensions Act, 1921, should be applied to them.

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