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# THE N.C.W. AND METROPOLITAN WOMEN POLICE.

By MRS. CARDEN, O.B.E.

*Late Hon. Secretary, Women Police and Patrols Committee.*

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## THE CALL FOR WOMEN.

For some years before the war the majority of social workers had ardently desired the employment of women on police duties, for women understand the psychology of their own sex better than any man can ever do, and are thus better qualified to deal with young girls.

In the first weeks of the war there was much excitement, intensified by the turmoil of mobilization and the gathering together of great numbers of young men and boys in camps, and the normal daily life of the community was dislocated. The danger to the girlhood of the country arising from this uncontrolled excitement was realised by all women's organisations and they determined to do what they could to stem the tide. The National Council of Women was among the first of these to take organised action to grapple with the dangers and appointed an *ad hoc* Committee under the Chairmanship of Mrs. Creighton, then President of the National Council, upon which a very large number of Societies were represented. This Committee, after anxious deliberation, decided to organise a body of voluntary workers to be called "Women Patrols."

## WOMEN PATROLS.

The Home Secretary gave the scheme his full official recognition, and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, Sir Edward Henry, gave it his most cordial support. As evidence of this he signed cards directing the police to give the Women Patrols every assistance in their work, and each woman carried one of these 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 also gladly given by successive War Ministers, First

Pamphlet



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Lords of the Admiralty, Officers in Command of Military Districts and competent authorities throughout the Kingdom.

The first Patrols, after being efficiently trained by specially instructed organisers, started work on 27th October, 1914, and from first to last between 4,000 and 5,000 were enrolled. No praise can be too high for the unselfishness of the work done by these splendid N.C.W. Women Patrols.

#### WOMEN SPECIALS.

Sir Edward Henry directed that careful observation of the work of the women patrols should be made and, as a result of the favourable reports received, he employed eight women patrols to report to him upon the conduct of Cinemas in the Metropolis. Later he increased their number by 30 to patrol Hyde Park and other open spaces. These "Special Women Patrols" worked under a Supervisor (Mrs. Stanley), who had been leader of the Portsmouth Patrols. Up to that date the work had been carried on by voluntary subscriptions, but Mrs. Stanley, though appointed by the N.C.W., was paid out of the Police Funds.

The Commissioner also granted these Specials the use of the official police armlet when on duty, and, acting on his suggestion—

"That if a well considered scheme for the employment of women patrols as paid workers was laid before the Home Secretary with a request that they might be subsidised, he—Sir Edward Henry—was prepared to support such an application and to employ them where possible"—

the Home Secretary was approached with the gratifying result that in 1917 a subvention of £400 per annum was granted to the N.C.W. for this work. Thus Sir Edward Henry created the nucleus of the future force of Women Police.

#### METROPOLITAN WOMEN POLICE.

In 1918, when Sir Nevil Macready succeeded Sir Edward Henry as Commissioner, his 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 was drawn up at Scotland Yard and approved by the Home Office, and, on 21st November, 1918, the Order constituting a Division of Metropolitan Women Police Patrols came into operation. The Division as constituted consisted of 100 rank and file, 10 sergeants, an Assistant Superintendent and a Superintendent.

The following are extracts from letters received by the Committee :—

New Scotland Yard, S.W.

16th November, 1918.

"I am directed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to acquaint you that the Secretary of State has now sanctioned the formation of a body of Women Police Patrols under his direct control, and he has therefore to give formal notice to terminate the existing arrangement arrived at between the Metropolitan Police and your Union under which an Annual subvention is paid from the Metropolitan Police Fund.

I am to inform you that the Commissioner wishes to offer the post of Superintendent to Mrs. Stanley."

A letter from Sir Nevil Macready, dated 8th July, 1919, gives his reasons for no longer signing the authorisation cards carried by the women patrols, the principal reasons being that "the voluntary patrols are practically working over the same ground as our trained women police," and he is "satisfied that what work there is can be carried out by the women police belonging to the Metropolitan Police."

The letter ends : "I need hardly say that we owe you and your Committee a very deep debt of gratitude for the work that you have carried on during the War, from which has sprung the officially recognised Women Police, which I hope will in the future do full justice to the voluntary organisation which preceded it."

A Board for the selection of the new women police was appointed and sat at New Scotland Yard. On it served Mrs. Stanley, the Superintendent ; Sub-Divisional Inspector Duncan, myself and one or two others. Of this Board I was elected Chairman.

The principal and primary duties of women police as officially laid down consist in dealing with women and children, ill, injured, destitute, homeless, and those who have been the victims of sexual offences, or are believed to be in danger of drifting towards an immoral life. The orders with regard to such routine details of their work as entering particulars of cases in pocket books, time cards, saluting, &c., were precisely similar to those given to male constables. They were also to be given access to Police Orders and other official publications. In fact, except that they were not attested and were not then eligible for pensions, the members of the Women Police Division were on much the same footing as the male force. The Police Pensions Act, 1921, made Police Women pensionable.

#### THE NEED ACKNOWLEDGED.

A small deputation from the N.C.W., which I had the honour of introducing, was received by Sir John Baird on 8th August, 1919. The following extracts from the introduction to the Report of the 1920 Committee gives the result :—

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"It was due to representations of this nature (the need for women police) that the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, in reply to a deputation which he received on 8th August, 1919, at the Home Office, gave an assurance that an enquiry into the employment of Police Women would be made early this year."

The Committee of Enquiry began its duties in February, 1920. The Chairman was Sir John Baird (now Lord Stonehaven) and the Report was issued in August of the same year. Evidence was heard from 47 expert witnesses of diverse views. The conclusions arrived at by the Committee upon the whole question are summed up in these 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.*"

AXED!

In 1922, the Committee on National Expenditure under the Chairmanship of Sir Eric Geddes reported adversely on the subject of the Metropolitan Women Police. The "Geddes Axe" fell upon the Force, but so vigorous a protest was made that a small remnant—20 per cent. of its members—was saved.

A Public Meeting, organised by the N.C.W. and its affiliated Societies, to protest against the disbandment of the Metropolitan Women Police was held on 3rd May, 1922, in the Central Hall, Westminster. The Lady Frances Balfour, then President of the National Council, was in the Chair; the speakers included Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland, Mr. Graham, M.P., and Mrs. Wintringham, M.P., and a letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury was read strongly supporting the protest. A resolution urging their retention and also that they should be attested was passed unanimously, and here, though I am somewhat anticipating, I may quote an announcement made on 1st February, 1923, by Mr. Bridgeman, Home Secretary:—

"The women police 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.'

In the House of Lords, Lord Aberdeen and the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke in their favour. Conferences were held in the House of Commons and, on 20th March, 1922, Mr. Shortt received a deputation organised by N.C.W. But all these efforts were of no avail, 20 women were all that were retained—for the whole of London!

FRESH EFFORTS.

Active propaganda seemed necessary, and therefore letters were

sent to all successful candidates at the Municipal Elections in 1922, and to every member of the new Parliament in 1924.

The N.C.W. also organised a deputation to the then Home Secretary (Mr. Henderson), who received it most sympathetically on 26th March, 1924, and said: "You are pushing at an open door, you may take it from me that *the principle* of women police is taken for granted." He stated that he was setting up a Committee to review the question in the light of the three and a half years' experience gained since 1920. The recommendations of this Committee, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Bridgeman, M.P., a former Home Secretary, were practically identical with those of the 1920 Committee; and to its report are appended two letters from Sir Nevil Macready, specifically advocating the employment of 200 women in London.

A letter was sent to the Home Secretary (Sir William Joynson-Hicks) on 25th November, 1924, and the reply, dated 16th December, 1924, was to the effect that the Report of the Departmental Committee, 1924, had been commended to the attention of the Police Authorities, and that the Home Secretary sanctioned an immediate increase up to 50 in the number of the Metropolitan Women Police. He did not feel justified *at present* in making regulations governing the conditions of service of police women in County and Borough Forces. In the House he stated that most of the Committee's recommendations dealt with matters he '*must leave to local authorities' discretion*'—in this respect the matter remains in much the same condition as before the Committee sat.

#### SIX POINT GROUP BILL.

In November, 1925, the Six Point Group invited the N.C.W. to discuss a Bill which Miss Wilkinson, M.P., had agreed to introduce into the House of Commons under the ten minutes rule, entitled the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882 (Amending) Bill. Section 191 of the 1882 Act enacts that:—

"The Watch Committee of a Borough Council shall from time to time appoint a sufficient number of fit men to be Borough Constables."

The proposed amending Bill would add the words "and a sufficient number of fit women."

After the most careful consideration the N.C.W. decided not to support it, because by imposing compulsion by statute on Watch Committees the principle of Local Government would be infringed, and Members of Parliament, even if in favour of women police, would not support it. It was also felt that any attempt to secure women police by



means other than those laid down in the Police Act, 1919 (*i.e.*, by Statutory Regulations) would result in failure—the Home Secretary already has the power to bring women within the full scope of that Act.

On 17th December, 1925, the Home Secretary received a deputation to ask for Government support for the Bill. It is obvious that the N.C.W. could not join in a deputation asking for support of a Bill of which they disapproved.

#### NEW DEPUTATION.

In fulfilment of a long-standing promise to the N.C.W. the Home Secretary and the Secretary for Scotland received a deputation on 23rd January, 1926. The Deputation was introduced by the Hon. Mrs. Franklin, President of the National Council of Women.

Miss Tancred submitted the facts brought out by the N.C.W. investigation into the conditions of Women in Custody in Police Cells; and the urgency of issuing Statutory Regulations for Police Women, which should govern their number, duties, training, conditions of service and pensions.

The Home Secretary stated that he was much indebted to Miss Tancred for the very admirable statement she had made. He was anxious to meet all the views of the deputation as to the construction of the cells, non-access of a man to the women's cells, and the provision of a matron or woman attendant in all police cells.

The Report of the Baird Committee, 1920, defined the duties, status and conditions of service of Police Women.

With regard to policewomen in London, the Home Secretary said he had already increased the number and proposed to increase it still further. Referring to the provinces, he said "I am prepared to issue yet another circular pointing out the extraordinary discrepancy between the number of women and men police (137 women and 53,734 men) and stating that in my view it is desirable there should be, at all events in big centres of population, women police, in order that they may deal with all work referring to women and children." The Secretary for Scotland promised to take similar action.

#### STEP BY STEP.

Some of the steps in the legal development of the Police Woman are :—

The Police Factories (Miscellaneous) Act, 1916, enabled payment for Patrols to be made out of the Police Fund.

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.

The Report of the Bridgeman Committee, 1924, reviewed the question in the light of the experience gained in regard to the employment of women police and made recommendations as to their future organisation and duties.

The findings of this Committee were almost the same as those of the Baird Committee, 1920. If the recommendations of these two Committees were carried out in their entirety, there would soon be a really efficient body of Women Police available for every Force requiring them.

*N.B.—For details of local work and particulars of the splendid work of the Women Police in Scotland see "N.C.W. News," June, 1925.*

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