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REPORT
OF THE
Standing Joint Committee
of Women
IN THE
Higher Grades of the
Civil Service

1923

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**Standing Joint Committee
of Women**

IN THE

**Higher Grades of the
Civil Service**

1923

COMMITTEE, 1920—1923.

		<i>Representing the</i>
Miss F. H. DURHAM, C.B.E. (Chairman)	}	- Ministry of Labour.
Miss E. SANDAY (Hon. Sec.)		
Miss H. MARTINDALE, O.B.E. (Hon. Treas.)	}	- Home Office.
Miss I. M. S. KEELY		
Miss H. TODD	}	- Ministry of Health.
Miss A. E. OTTER (Hon. Sec.)		
Miss E. F. BOULTON	}	- Board of Education.
Miss E. J. AHRONS		
Miss BROWNE	-	Ministry of Pensions.
Miss WEBSTER	-	A.G. Dept., General Post Office.
Miss MARWOOD	-	M.O. Dept., General Post Office.
Miss GOLD	-	S.B. Dept., General Post Office.
Miss CLARK	-	Public Trustee Office.
DAME ADELAIDE ANDERSON, D.B.E., Retired Civil Servant (Co-opted Member.)		

Standing Joint Committee of Women in the Higher Grades of the Civil Service.

REPORT, 1920—1923.

Formation of Committee.

The Committee owes its origin to the initiative of three Women Civil Servants then stationed in Bristol, i.e., Miss Deane (of the Ministry of Labour), Miss McCleverty (of the Ministry of Health), and Miss Sadler (of the Home Office), who were responsible for organising a meeting held in London on April 16th, 1920, with the idea of setting up machinery whereby women in the higher grades of the Civil Service could formulate and give expression to their views on matters relating to women in the Civil Service and could watch their interests generally.

At this meeting, which was presided over by Miss Squire (of the Home Office) and was attended by a large number of women of high standing in the Civil Service, the following Government Departments were represented:—The Board of Education, the Home Office, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Pensions, the Post Office, and the Police Commission. A resolution was passed to the effect that a Committee should be formed, representative of women in the Administrative, Executive and Professional classes of the Civil Service, to watch their common interests and to confer with and advise their representatives in the

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various Civil Service Associations, with the object of securing the more adequate representation of their views on the National Whitley Council and equality of treatment between men and women. It was also agreed that the women concerned in each Department of the Service should be entitled to elect two of their number to such a Committee.

The initial work of forming the Committee was undertaken provisionally by the small original Committee of three, who, with the assistance of several Headquarter members of various Government Departments, were successful in calling the first meeting of elected representatives on July 13th, 1920.

Membership and Constitution.

It was by degrees only that nominations of women to serve on the Committee were received from all Government Departments concerned. It may now be said, however, to be representative of upwards of 400 women, in Treasury grades above that of the Higher Clerical and in corresponding Departmental grades, in all the more important Departments of the Civil Service employing women in a permanent capacity. The necessity for increasing the Committee to include representatives of Departments to which women have been appointed through the medium of the recent examinations for women for Administrative and Executive posts will not be overlooked.

The Committee was fortunate in securing Dame Adelaide Anderson (of the Home Office) as its first permanently elected Chairman. She retained office until her retirement in July, 1921, when her place was taken by Miss Durham (of the Ministry of Labour). The Committee has benefited greatly from the standing and wide experience of its two Chairmen. Dame Adelaide, we are glad to report, still retains her membership of, and interest in, the Committee, as a co-opted member.

The constitution of the Committee appears as Appendix I. of this Report.

Work of the Committee.

The Committee has held seventeen meetings during the period under review, for the most part at intervals of two months.

Correspondence with the Treasury has taken place on the following subjects:—(a) The draft regulations governing the appointment of women to the new (re-organisation) classes of the Civil Service; (b) the vacancies for women as Old Age Pensions Officers in the Customs and Excise Department; (c) the appointment of Women Establishment Officers; (d) the examinations for women for Administrative, Executive and Higher Clerical posts; (e) the Committee formed to report on the general principles of common seniority lists for men and women to the classes included in the Report of the Re-organisation Committee of the Civil Service National Whitley Council, also with the National Whitley Council on the subject of the representation of women on that body.

The Committee has kept in touch with the Federation of Women Civil Servants by correspondence and by nominating representatives to serve on Joint Committees dealing with subjects of common interest to both bodies, such as dependency and wastage among Women Civil Servants, and the question of the formation of a special Joint Committee of the National Whitley Council to advise on matters concerning women in the Civil Service.

The following Societies have from time to time approached the Committee for information and suggested action:—The London Society for Women's Service, the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, the Edinburgh Women Citizens' Association, the Six Point Group, the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland, the Family Endowment Council and the Industrial Christian Fellowship.

The Committee was represented on a Deputation to the Treasury in December, 1921, from the Joint Committee on Women in the Civil Service under the Chairmanship of Mrs.

Strachey, on the subject of equal treatment of men and women under re-organisation and of the appointment of Women Establishment Officers.

The Committee has been approached on more than one occasion to take an active share in questions affecting women generally, whether inside or outside the Civil Service. It has, however, been consistent in confining its activities, in so far as giving information or definite expressions of opinion are concerned, to matters arising within the Civil Service, with which, constituted as it is, it feels itself specially competent to deal.

Segregation and Aggregation.

The Committee has given close attention to the question of Segregation and Aggregation, as applied to men and women in the Civil Service, with a view to arriving at an expression of opinion on this subject which would meet the views of women in the Service generally. This has been a matter of some difficulty, owing to the varying nature of the work of the different Departments and of the reasons underlying the allocation in certain Departments of blocks of work or specialised work to women. A memorandum on this subject has now, however, been finally agreed by the Committee, and is reproduced in Appendix II. to this Report.

Provincial Machinery.

At a comparatively early stage the Committee realised that some sort of machinery was necessary to keep it in touch with its constituents outside London. Regional Secretaries were, therefore, appointed, through whom information might be circulated from and to the Committee. A list of these Regional Secretaries is given in Appendix III.

It is hoped to hold Annual General Meetings of the Committee, which will be open to all constituents, and the first of these, combined with an "At Home," has been arranged for May 5th, 1923.

Obituary.

We have to record with regret the death on August 10th, 1922, of Miss I. A. Dickson, O.B.E., Assistant Secretary, Board of Education. The Committee was represented at the memorial service held at St. Columba's (Church of Scotland), Pont Street, S.W., on August 14th, 1922.

A. E. OTTER.

E. SANDAY,

Hon. Secretaries.

March, 1923.

Appendix I.

CONSTITUTION AND RULES.

I.—TITLE.

"Standing Joint Committee of Women in the Higher Grades of the Civil Service."

II.—CONSTITUTION OF COMMITTEE.

The Committee to be constituted of representatives of women in the administrative, professional and executive classes, or in such grades as may be ruled by the Committee to be equivalent to any of these, in all branches of the Civil Service in which women are employed.

III.—OBJECTS.

(1) To provide a means of communication between women in the higher branches of the Civil Service.

(2) To provide an organisation by which their united views may be ascertained and expressed, and joint action taken where deemed advisable.

(3) To work for equality in regard to opportunity, status and pay as between men and women in the Civil Service.

IV.—ELECTION OF COMMITTEE.

Each Department shall normally be entitled to two representatives on the Committee, except that Departments with less than twenty constituents shall be entitled to one representative only, while Departments with over 100 constituents shall have an additional representative for each additional 100 or fraction of 100 constituents. The representatives of each Department on the Committee shall be formally elected by the constituents in that Department from among their number.

V.—CO-OPTION OF RETIRED CIVIL SERVANTS.

The Committee shall have power to co-opt for its term of office any retired Civil Servant who has served on the Committee. Such co-opted members shall not at any one time exceed three in number.

VI.—DURATION OF COMMITTEE.

The Committee to be re-elected triennially, retiring members to be eligible for re-election.*

* The first re-election will take place in May, 1923.

VII.—OFFICERS.

The officers shall consist of the Chairman, two Honorary Secretaries, and Honorary Treasurer. The Chairman of the Committee shall be elected annually by the Committees, and shall be a woman holding important rank in the Civil Service. The other officers shall be appointed by the Committee from among their number.

VIII.—MEETINGS.

Ordinary Meetings shall be held once every two months. Special Meetings may be called at the discretion of the officers. Members unable to attend may send a deputy, who shall be entitled to vote.

IX.—FINANCE.

A contribution of not less than 3s. 6d., payable on the first day of January of each year, shall be invited from every woman entitled to vote for a representative on the Committee. Regional Secretaries shall be entitled to retain 1s. out of each subscription to meet local expenses.

X.—REGIONAL SECRETARIES.

In order that the Committee may be kept in close touch with the feeling and opinion of constituents in the provinces, it shall have power to appoint Regional Secretaries, through whom information following each meeting of the Committee will be supplied to constituents.

Appendix II.

Note on Segregation and Aggregation.

In Section III., paragraph 9, of the Report on the Organisation of the Civil Service by the Joint Committee of the National Whitley Council, it is stated "whether the interests of efficiency will best be served by segregation, or by the employment of women and men side by side, is a matter on which experience varies; and we suggest that the requirements of Departments in this respect might be appropriately discussed at the Departmental Councils. It may fairly be argued that, in order to obtain the full value of the experiment, every opportunity should be given to men and women to work side by side."

Four years have now elapsed since the issue of that Report. In that period Departments have addressed themselves with more or less thoroughness to frame re-organisation schemes in consonance with the lines laid down in that Report. As far as is known, by one Department only has this question been remitted to a special Sub-Committee of the Departmental Whitley Council. In the case of the Ministry of Labour, a Committee of the Departmental Whitley Council was appointed "to consider the general principles of segregation and aggregation, and to gather the experience of officers of the Ministry of Labour on the question of whether the sexes work better together or apart." The Report of this Committee, which has been adopted by the Departmental Whitley Council, recommended neither complete aggregation, nor complete segregation, but after analysing all the various branches of work required to be performed by the Department classified these under five headings:—

- (a) Necessarily women's work.
- (b) More appropriately women's work.
- (c) Work common to both sexes.
- (d) More appropriately men's work.
- (e) Necessarily men's work.

Generally speaking, the Committee found that the normal official duties falling to the Treasury classes (clerical, executive and administrative) were equally appropriate for either men or women, but that in those branches of work in which the official is brought into direct contact with the outside public, it was more appropriate, and in certain cases necessary, that the sex of the officer should be determined by consideration of the nature of the work in question, and whether men or women were mainly con-

cerned. Thus, for instance, it is regarded as essential that the men's departments of Exchanges should be staffed by women, and the men's departments by men, and it was recommended that e.g., in Trade Boards Department) normally, but not invariably, men should be sent to inspect men's work and women to inspect women's work.

Although in general this question has not received as serious attention as the subject merits, and the harvest of opportunities so far accruing to women is small, it is nevertheless clear that there is ground for hoping that the position of women in the Service is gradually improving. Setting aside the serious temporary block to further progress in the introduction of women into the Service, which will endure until normal growth has overtaken the present redundancy of male Staff, due to over-staffing and subsequent shrinkage of substantive positions, the measure of further progress depends largely on the attitude of the women themselves, the extent to which they are able to adjust and adapt themselves to such new work as falls to their share, and the degree to which they are prepared to depart from traditional methods of organisation.

It is incontestable that the extent of the sphere of usefulness to be assigned in future to women in the Civil Service, and indeed to some extent the ultimate efficiency of the Civil Service as the administrative machine to give effect to the policy of the Government, depends upon the solution arrived at with regard to segregation and aggregation. It is also obvious that were any extensive or rapid change made in the system which has hitherto been adopted for the re-organisation of the branches of service in which the bulk of the women civil servants are engaged, the position of large numbers of existing civil servants would be materially and even prejudicially affected, and, therefore, whatever be the merits of either aggregation or segregation, any turnover which may be advocated in the interests of the general efficiency of the Service and of the future generation of men and women Civil Servants must proceed slowly, with due regard to the legitimate claims of existing men and women officers.

It will be generally agreed that to this, as to all questions affecting large numbers of persons, no one solution can be found to fit all cases. It will also be admitted that no reform or progress towards future reform can be brought about except at some sacrifice on the part of the present generation in the interests of the future.

It is a favourite argument that women suffer less from constant application to routine tasks than do men, and perform such tasks with greater efficiency, and on these grounds there is considerably more readiness to assign the lower grades of clerical work to women. It must not, however, be overlooked that, by reason of their lower salaries, the performance of large blocks of routine work can be more cheaply obtained by women labour than by men labour, and it is, moreover, abundantly proved that even if superior in conscientiousness and care of detail, women

suffer no less than men from the dreary monotony and scant prospect of change of work and promotion, which their assignment in large numbers under a system of segregation entails. A system of mixed staffs for work of this character is open, however, to the grave risk of existing avenues of promotion for women being even more restricted than at present, by reason of the inclination of higher authorities, assisted by pressure from the lower ranks of the men, to award the major proportion of higher posts to men, thus practically confining the women to the lower positions. This is one of the main arguments against the introduction of aggregation in Departments where existing organisation is on a segregated basis and women's branches, with a high reputation for efficiency, have been built up by the arduous and devoted work of women. Any change in such a system, if it is to be one of progress, postulates a recognition of the feasibility of women controlling a male staff, as well as the converse, and of the existence of a desire for fair play on both sides. It may be said at once that already the experience of men and women, working in a large mixed department, with a wholesome spirit of "give and take" between them, gives ground for believing that both desiderata mentioned above may be attained, given time and tact in the introduction of the change of system.

In work conducted in smaller cadres, and especially in work such as that normally undertaken by the super-clerical, executive and administrative grades of the Treasury classes, it is clearly to the interest of the women that an aggregated system of organisation should be general. The women have much to gain from association with the men from whose larger opportunities of training and wide experience they have much to learn, while undoubtedly the men will also gain from close contact with and better understanding of the different mentality of women, and of the different view-point from which they will approach the administrative problems.

At the same time it must be borne in mind that no substantial progress can be made in advance of public opinion, and that therefore, with regard to branches of work such as that of Departmental classes, in which the Civil Servant is brought into personal dealings with the public, the prejudices of the public must be to a reasonable measure observed, and it is advisable, in order that men and women may be used to the best advantage, that care should be directed to secure that a judicious selection should be made in regard to the tasks allotted to each, on the lines adopted in the Report referred to in Paragraph 2.

General Conclusions.

The employment of women in the Civil Service has, for the most part, been conducted under a system of segregation. Under this system, women have proved themselves capable of attaining a standard of efficiency as good, and even better, than that attained

by men engaged on similar duties. This has been abundantly proved, e.g., in Departments where large blocks of routine clerical work have been assigned to women. Experience has also shown that in certain branches of work, e.g., relating especially to women's interests, women officers have achieved results which could not otherwise have been obtained.

It is, however, clear that so long as women are employed on a basis of segregation only, or engaged only on work "specially regarded as women's work," their sphere of usefulness and of advancement will be unduly restricted. They will be debarred from dealing with major questions of policy and administration, of gaining experience by working on a common footing with their men colleagues, and of contributing their share of understanding and experience to the handling of such problems. Departments have not yet given the question of aggregation the consideration due.

Where mixed staffs have been introduced, however, experience has shown that not only is the difficulty of discipline commonly anticipated non-existent, but that an improvement in general efficiency may be reached.

While it is now recognised that women are capable of performing work of the administrative grade, the opportunities afforded are unduly limited.

It is recognised that progress must perforce be slow (especially in view of the general shrinkage taking place in the Service), and it is essential that the introduction of aggregation shall take place at the minimum inconvenience and prejudice to existing personnel. The rate of advance will depend in large part on the efforts of the women themselves, and the extent to which, in new spheres of work, they make good. It must not be forgotten, however, that this in its turn will depend on the opportunities for training and gaining experience afforded to them. Further, some recognition must be given to the disability under which women are likely to suffer for some years to come as the result of their numerical inferiority. The fact that their chances will inevitably be rendered unequal to those of men, owing to the smaller field of selection, should entitle them to receive special consideration.

Appendix III.

Names and Addresses of Hon. Secretaries.

General Secretaries:

MISS E. SANDAY and MISS A. E. OTTER, 152a, Haverstock Hill,
London, N.W. 3.

Regional Secretaries:

LONDON AND SOUTH-EASTERN REGION.

MISS LOVEDAY (Board of Education), 63, Albany Mansions,
Albert Bridge Road, S.W.

SOUTH MIDLANDS AND EASTERN REGION.

MISS JENNINGS (Ministry of Health), 52, Broad Street, Blooms-
bury, W.C. 2.

SOUTH-WESTERN REGION.

MISS DEANE, O.B.E. (Ministry of Labour), Carlton House,
Woodland Road, Bristol.

WEST MIDLANDS REGION.

MISS TAYLOR (Home Office), 174, Corporation Street, Bir-
mingham.

NORTH-WESTERN REGION.

MISS ESCREET (Home Office), 147, Dickenson Road, Rushholme,
Manchester.

YORKSHIRE AND EAST MIDLANDS REGION.

MISS RIDGEWAY (Ministry of Labour), Quebec Chambers, Leeds.

NORTHERN REGION.

MISS COHEN (Ministry of Health), Anderson Buildings, Market
Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

SCOTTISH REGION.

MISS GLEN (Scottish Board of Health), 250, St. Vincent Street,
Glasgow.

Standing Joint Committee of Women in the Higher Grades of the Civil Service

Statement of Accounts, 1st January, 1922, to 31st December, 1922.

RECEIPTS.				£ s. d.
Balance in hand on 1st January, 1922 ...				22 14 10
Subscriptions (1921)				1 4 6
" (1922)				38 3 0
" (1923)				3 6
				£62 5 10

EXPENDITURE.				£ s. d.
Retained by Regional Secretaries for local expenses (in accordance with Rule IX.)				8 18 0
Typing and Postage				8 4 11
Printing				2 18 6
Cheque Book and Commission				2 3
Cash at bank				41 18 8
Cash in hand of Treasurer				3 6
				£62 5 10

15

(Signed) HILDA MARTINDALE.
ELIZABETH SANDAY.

