

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF GREAT
BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

Metropolitan Police Women Patrols
AND
The Geddes Report.

The Geddes Report states :—

“ We have considered the question of the employment of Women Patrols. These Women Patrols, 110 in number, are in addition to the numbers of Police. Their pay is only 10/- a week less than that of the “ uniformed ” Constable. Their powers are very limited, and their utility from a Police point of view is, on the evidence submitted to us, negligible. We do not think that in present circumstances this expenditure can be justified.”

“ Their utility is. . . negligible.” It may be instructive to compare this statement with the figures given below for the year dating from 1st January to 31st December, 1921.

The total number of persons assisted by the Women Patrols was 49,813. Under this heading, in addition to other cases, the following are included :—

Women prisoners searched	1,089
Women prisoners escorted	322
Attempted suicides observed at hospitals			58

All the above work must be done by women and must be paid for out of the Police Fund, even if the Women Patrols are disbanded, but in that case it will cost more as women will have to be specially appointed for the purpose.

Shelters and beds have been found for 6,465 girls, and 1,419 lost children have been restored to their parents. It is true that this particular department of their work might be done by men, but women are, we contend, far better suited to deal with such cases.

With regard to the preventive work done by the Women Patrols, under the heading of the Welfare Department we find 1,131 girls and women passed on to voluntary homes,

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hospitals, etc. These girls would otherwise quite certainly have come upon the rates, or have drifted in and out of prison and have been a heavy charge on the State.

Some conception of the extent of the preventive work can be gathered from the fact that, in addition to the above, no fewer than 70,140 persons were cautioned during 1921, of whom 20,747 were found loitering. Sir Robert Peel stated in 1829 that "the primary object of an efficient Police Force is the prevention of crime." If this be so, the value of the Women Patrols cannot be counted in £ s. d. and their utility can hardly be said to be "negligible."

"*Their powers are very limited.*" The women's organisations have consistently urged that the Women Patrols should be sworn in. Sir Nevil Macready urged this in 1920 before the Home Office Committee on the Employment of Women in Police Duties, and stated that if this were done he would place the whole question of solicitation in the hands of the Women Patrols. This would effect a considerable economy. Then again at present a woman prisoner has to be escorted by a constable as well as a patrol, thus necessitating double fares, etc. The State cannot afford to employ constables for this purpose when the duties could be carried out equally well by the woman alone, were she sworn in.

It is therefore urged that these "limited powers" are not in the interests of true economy.

"*On the evidence submitted to us.*" What was this damning evidence? Was Mr. J. W. Olive, C.B.E., Assistant Commissioner of Police, called upon to give evidence? Was Mr. James Billings, Superintendent of Division A., called? Was Dame Helen Gwynne Vaughan or the Superintendent of the Women Patrols called?

The conclusions arrived at in the Geddes Report are found to be in direct conflict with those arrived at by the Home Office Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties (Chairman, Sir John Baird) which reported on the "urgent need" for their establishment in all big towns.

The disbanding of the Women Patrols would be no real economy, for the cost of prisons, workhouses and hospitals would be greater. The expenditure on the police force is a good investment for the country—to increase their powers would be the truest economy.

This leaflet may be ordered from the General Secretary, National Council of Women, Parliament Mansions, Victoria Street, Westminster, price 2/- per 100 or 1d. each, postage extra.

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