



Joint Women's V.A.D. Department.

Commandant-in-Chief—Mrs. CHARLES W. FURSE.

AL/1635



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KF/MEB.

DEVONSHIRE HOUSE,
LONDON, W.

20th January, 1917.

Dear Mrs. Strachey,

Will you look at the attached copy of a letter to Mrs. Wilkins. She came to see me a long time ago with a view to discussing co-operation.

I notice in the enclosed cutting from the "Daily Express" of 19th January that Mrs. Fawcett approves of the new scheme for the organisation of women for work on the land. I am strongly of opinion that we shall soon find things even more difficult than they have been up to date. There have hitherto been so many available women that we have not felt much shortage anywhere. But with all the independent calls upon them we shall soon feel a shortage. I do not believe that my V.A.D. Organisation will suffer as much as any other, so far as our paid nursing members are concerned. The General Service and unpaid Members have been so invariably snubbed and discouraged by the Military Authorities that they deserve to have the chance of better work under better conditions in other spheres. At the same time it is very wasteful of energy, and not productive of the best spirit in women if they are appealed to by various Organisations competing for their services.

I hope

I had hoped to see the Employment Department, strengthened
by improved working under Mr. Neville Chamberlain, as the one
Source of supply of women for Government work. Is it too late
to urge this?

Yours sincerely,

Katherine Furse

Mrs. STRACHEY,

58, Victoria Street,

S.W.

with MEN. AL/ 1635

STORM OF COMPLAINTS TO THE AUTHORITIES.

WHAT WOMEN WILL DO.

If the number of letters and telegrams received yesterday by the Board of Agriculture may be taken as any criterion of the discontent aroused among farmers by the decision to call 50 per cent. of unexempted agricultural workers to the colours and replace them with C 3 men—"sedentaries"—then the situation is delicate and difficult. Such a postbag has never been known at the offices of the board. Telegrams arrived all day long, and many farmers made personal calls.

One correspondent forwarded a long parody of "The Farmer's Boy," of which this is a specimen stanza:—

The wintry wind was blowing cold,
 Across the Surrey Down.
 A man there came,
 Footsore and lame,
 From an office in the town.
 "I belong," said he,
 "To the Class C 3,
 But I'll do the best I can,
 To plough or sow, or reap or mow,
 And be a farmer's man."

The "Daily Express" representative was authorised to state in general terms that the interests of the farmers will not be overlooked. The guiding principle of selection and substitution will be not to leave the farmer worse off, but to improve his position. Farmers must make the best of things in the worst of times.

"As to the class of work which C 3 men will do," it was stated, "that must be left to the discretion of the farmer. It would

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 Queries from readers
 are answered on
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be absurd to put a pianist straight to the plough, or a city clerk to the charge of stock, but to make men of any profession serviceable on farms, in one way or another, need not present insuperable difficulties. Men who cannot be spared, whose places cannot be filled, owing to the highly skilled nature of their work, will presumably be retained by the farmer as far as that can be made possible."

Objection is taken by trade unionists to Mr. Prothero's statement that the C 3 men will be formed into battalions and work under military command. The Trade Union Congress Parliamentary Committee considered the question yesterday, and decided to make immediate representations to the War Office. It was pointed out that when the committee previously interviewed Lord Derby and Brigadier-General Geddes on the subject of military control of men engaged in civilian occupations it was definitely stated that wherever soldiers were sent into civil occupations they would receive civilian pay and be free from military control.

WOMEN'S ARMY.

RESULTS ACHIEVED BY A UNIFORM.

The suggestion put forward by Mr. Prothero that a uniformed army of women should be formed to work on the land at soldier's pay and under military conditions has everywhere met with approval.

Details of the plan have not yet been worked out. A "Daily Express" representative was informed at the Board of Agriculture yesterday that the scheme is only in the suggestion stage at present.

"The scheme originated with us," said Miss Franklin, secretary of the Women's National Land Service Corps, to a "Daily Express" representative. "The great difficulty with women farm workers is that of accommodation, but compulsory billeting under the direction of the military authorities would settle this. Every advantage would be taken of existing house-room in the country districts, but where this is lacking huts can be put up, provided a sufficient number of workers are likely to be employed in the neighbourhood. The War Office would be responsible for the billeting, rationing, clothing, and, I hope, for the medical examination of the workers.

"We also urge that an inter-departmental committee should be formed with women members, to link up the working of the scheme with the Board of Agriculture, the Board of Trade, and the War Office.

VOLUNTEERS.

"I do not think," added Miss Franklin, "that compulsion will be necessary. When women know that their interests will be fully safeguarded, that their clothes, food, and housing are guaranteed, and that they will be paid 1s. a day, they will be quite ready to come forward. The low wages offered and the fact that few could afford to provide themselves with suitable clothes or be assured that they would not be out of pocket, have been the stumbling blocks up to the present."

The results achieved by putting women into uniform and directing their work on military lines are demonstrated by the Cookery Section of the Women's Legion. Mrs. Long, the secretary of the section, considers that without the uniform the work could not have been carried on as successfully as has been the case.

"The uniform is absolutely necessary to enforce discipline," she said, "particularly when the women, as with our members, are working in close touch with the soldiers. Our members live in the camps, and wear uniform from the moment they join. They are perfectly happy living in huts. I do not see why the Government should not copy our methods for country districts where there are not enough houses for billeting. Cantonments could be built similar to those provided for women munition makers."

The commandant of the Motor Section of the Women's Legion, which supplies women chauffeurs for the Army Service Corps and the Royal Flying Corps, states that these women, who wear a military uniform, prefer to have this distinctive mark of their employment. It commands respect and good feeling.

Mrs. Henry Fawcett, president of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, fully approves of Mr. Prothero's scheme.

"It will solve the accommodation problems," she stated, "and means that the women will be working under proper conditions."