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BOOK

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# CARD-INDEXES AND ENCOURAGEMENT BUT NO REGIMENTATION

TILL very recently my interest in the Physical Welfare and Recreation Branch of the Internal Affairs Department has been negligible. It was not till some earnest people had begun to hint the damning word "pro-fascist" and even the least sensation-seeking dailies had quoted phrases such as "regimentation of youth" and "bureaucratic control rather than encouragement" that it occurred to me that there might be news-value in the work of the Physical Welfare Branch. It was this which led me to contact Miss Rena Stephenson, recently-appointed Physical Welfare Officer for the Wellington district. From her own descriptions of the work she was doing I hoped to be able to establish in my own mind at least whether a glint of coloured shirts was as yet visible over the political horizon.

## Subsidies to Clubs

Miss Stephenson herself is tall and fair, almost a Nordic type, in fact, but the last person in the world to arouse suspicion about the "regimentation of youth."

"How does the Department work?" I asked. "Does it set up sports groups of its own or does it try to work through existing societies?"

"Wherever possible we try to work through existing organisations, by increasing the membership and if necessary by subsidising them. It's only if there's no suitable organisation in the district that the Department sets up its own activities."

## Drama And Debating

But the work of the Department, she emphasised, was not concerned entirely with sporting activities. The Physical Welfare and Recreation Branch came into being with the forty-hour week, and its object was to help people to make the best use of their leisure time. Dramatic clubs and debating societies, art and musical appreciation circles were flourishing under the departmental aegis.

"What is this system of card-indexing for schoolchildren?" I asked. "Do you do any work in connection with that?"

"Yes, we all have to. It's a lot of work for officers of the Departments and all done for the benefit of existing clubs and societies."

"You see, as far as physical activities are concerned, there's often some sort of hiatus between the time the child leaves school, say at fourteen, and the

time he's old enough to join a sports club. This means too often that the child drops sport altogether."

"That's where our card-index comes in. While at school each child fills in a card giving the names of the sports he is most interested in—it doesn't matter to us what sport the child plays, but we like him to play something. Then we compile lists of all the children interested in a particular sport in that district and send the lists to the sports clubs concerned. If necessary, we help them with junior coaching, but many of the clubs themselves provide coaching for younger members."

## Dangers of War-Time Living

In war-time, of course, when people had less spare time, it was all the more important that it should be used to the best possible advantage. Miss Stephenson mentioned the fact that the tuberculosis figures for women in British factories had shown an alarming increase, and that to combat this and similar dangers of war-time living the British Government had set up a Central Council for Recreative Training.

"That's why the work of our Branch is so important now," said Miss Stephenson. "We're working harder than we've ever worked before. I'm kept fairly busy



MISS RONA STEPHENSON  
Coloured shirts aren't visible

arranging 'keep fit' classes for the W.W.S.A., giving lectures on diet and general health topics, and compiling lists of schoolgirls who want to play anything from ping-pong to croquet."

The word "croquet" killed all my lingering doubts. No State bent on regimenting its youth for Fascist purposes, I reasoned would encourage its young women to play croquet."

—M.B.

# Good Women and True

AFTER 20 years' consistent effort on the part of feminists, the "Women Jurors Bill, 1942" was passed during the recent Parliamentary session, and thereafter duly intitled and engraved, perhaps irrevocably, upon the statute books of New Zealand.

Clause 2 of the Act provides that: "Any woman between the ages of 25 years and 60 years who possesses the qualifications for service as a juror required by the principle set in the case of a man, and is not exempted or disqualified by that Act, and who notifies the Sheriff in writing that she desires to serve as a juror, shall be qualified and liable to serve on juries in the same manner in all respects as if she were a man."

"And a good thing, too," said Mrs. Mary Dreaver, M.P., when I interviewed her shortly after the new Act had been passed. "After all, they've had women jurors in England and America and Tasmania for a good many years now—it's time we New Zealanders did something about it."

"And are you satisfied with the bill as it stands? You don't approve of jury service being made compulsory for all women?"

## No Compulsion

"No, I don't think it should be compulsory. After all, so many women are tied by their home duties or by their children, and it would be unfair to expect them to serve on a jury for perhaps days at a time. Then there's another point—you've got to make allowance for a woman's sensibility. To some women the idea of being in any way 'mixed up' in criminal proceedings is repugnant.

That's why I think women should be allowed to choose whether or not they wish to serve on juries."

"In that case do you think you'll get the right type of person applying to serve on a jury? Isn't there a danger that you'll get the type of woman who takes a ghoulish interest in murder trials?"

## The Right Type

"Better that," said Mrs. Dreaver darkly, "than to force to serve on a jury a woman tied by her domestic life or embarrassed by her emotions. However, I think the women most anxious to serve as jurors will be those already active in public life, on committees, health organisations, hospital boards and city councils—older women who no longer have children to look after."

Mrs. Dreaver went on to speak of the value of women on juries. "For one thing, they have a much better understanding of young people of either sex—you have to be a mother before you really understand young people. So I would say that especially in cases affecting women and children it is essential in the interests of justice to have women on a jury. Women look at things more psychologically."

"Women are built differently from men," she went on. "They're more kindly and sympathetic. They don't like sordid things, and they shrink from anything that smacks of brutality and violence."

## Sensible at Twenty-Five

"Which reminds me," I interrupted. "Don't you think it a slur on women that men should serve on juries between

(Continued on next page)



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