

DEPUTATION TO MR MASSEY RE WOMEN POLICE AND OTHER MATTERS.

A small deputation of women, representing the women citizens of the Dominion, waited on the Prime Minister on August 3rd, to urge upon the Government the appointment of women police, the raising of the age of consent, and the extension to 12 months of the time within which an information may be laid in cases of assault with criminal intent. The deputation included two Mayoresses and other prominent women from the four centres, in each of which a large public meeting of women has been held within the last few months, summoned by the Mayoress, for the discussion of social questions.

After the deputation had been introduced briefly by Dr. Newman, Miss Melville (Auckland) spoke forcibly as to the need for the reforms asked for. Women police or patrols—the name was immaterial, provided they were armed with the authority of the Government—were not expected to deal with criminals; their work was preventive, and would be much more effective if they held an official position, with status similar to that of policemen than if they were voluntary workers. As member of the City Council, she had had opportunities for seeing what good work women could do, and for knowing how necessary it was to do more for the protection of young girls.

Miss Henderson (Christchurch) gave a brief resume of what had been done in other parts of the world. Chicago had 29 police women, Canada many, appointed and paid as the policemen are, South Africa and the Australian States also. In Sydney the experiment had been tried before the war, and the result was so satisfactory that the Attorney-General had recommended more be appointed. In Great Britain the position was different, the workers being voluntary, but in July of last year the Government had taken over the power under the War Regulations Act, and had appointed large numbers of women, especially in connection with munitions factories, and by a later Act the power was given to Borough Councils, and there were now 2284 women patrols, paid out of police funds. According to a cable of June 17 of this year the Commissioner of

Police stated that the condition of London streets was much improved, thanks to the women patrols. As far as New Zealand was concerned, they were not asking for a large number, and only for the four centres, to begin with.

Mrs A. R. Atkinson (Wellington), after referring to the large public meeting held in Wellington as extraordinary for the earnestness of the large body of women there assembled, and for the wide scope of the resolutions passed unanimously, went on to speak of the necessity for education in combating the social evil. She would like to see prepared and issued to civilians a leaflet similar to that already provided for the soldiers in camps. The evil arose primarily from the wrong way of life, and from the wrong impression in the minds of people. Two great impulses in human nature were the instinct of self-preservation and the sexual instinct. The war had shown how men could triumph over the first; and we refused to believe that there was lacking in man that which could hold in restraint the second. There were the higher instincts of loyalty to wife, future wife, children, home, and one aim in the education of the young was to inculcate higher ideals. In dealing with disease itself, free treatment for those voluntarily presenting themselves had already proved more effective than any form of compulsion. Women police would help to bring about a better state of things, but it was important that careful selection should be made, so as to get really suitable women, and they should go through a definite course of police instruction, that they might be conversant with the laws under which they were working.

Mrs Glover (Wellington) spoke from the point of view of the Salvation Army worker. Hardly a day passed that she did not have to deal with some case where the friendly warning and advice of a tactful woman might have prevented the first step leading to ruin. Child life was the greatest asset of the nation, and on behalf of the children she appealed to Government to introduce a reform which experience in other places had shown to be helpful in saving wayward and self-willed girls from going down.

Miss Downie Stewart (Dunedin) endorsed what the previous speakers had

said, and hoped that the Prime Minister would see his way to taking some action.

The other members of the deputation also supported what had been said.

Mr Massey, in reply, stated that Government had already made a beginning in the direction asked for. Police matrons had been appointed, whose duties included much of the work that police women would do, e.g., visiting parks and public gardens, picture theatres, railway stations, attending Juvenile Courts, seeing about neglected children, etc., etc. He then spoke of what he had himself seen and heard of the work of women patrols in England, a voluntary body under control of their own organisation, but recognised by the police, and he stated officially that the Government would be glad of similar assistance here. He had taken the opportunity, when he attended the Imperial Conference, of moving a resolution dealing with these matters, and the Chief of Police had promised that the resolution should be given effect to.

In answer to a question, he stated that the additional police matrons had been appointed from May 25th of this year, but he did not know anything as to their training, nor as to how the plan was working.

Miss Melville said that she knew something of what was being done in Auckland. The police matron there had no time for outside work in addition to her regular duties in the police station and the Juvenile Court; and she had no authority, for example, to order girls off the street. Adjutant Gordon (Salvation Army) was often asked to do unofficially the work that we were asking for police women to do, and it was necessary to supplement the work of the police matrons.

Mrs J. P. Luke, Mayoress of Wellington, having briefly thanked the Prime Minister, the deputation withdrew.

President Hazard, of Wellesley, told the following at a banquet:

"A girl graduate, in taking leave of her dean, said, 'Good-bye, professor; I shall not forget you. I am indebted to you for all I know.'

"'Oh, I beg of you,' replied the professor, 'don't mention such a trifle.'"