

In some Departments systematic welfare work was necessitated by the rapidly increasing number of women in excess of the accommodation originally provided. This was carried out to the fullest extent in the General Post Office, Wellington, where, during 1918-19, instead of the pre-war number of about seventy, some three hundred and fifty women were employed, including about fifty telegraph messengers between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. A special Supervising Officer was appointed, whose duties lie solely with the welfare of the staff, and who co-operates with the Medical Officer in this direction. The work has been most successful; it has relieved Heads of Departments of responsibility, and from their own testimony is of very great assistance both to them and to the staff.

Some Departments have appointed a matron, generally a senior member of the staff, who to a lesser extent carries out similar duties.

Elected Welfare Committees exist in several Departments, and do good work.

I would strongly urge the appointment of women on all Boards and Committees dealing with buildings and accommodation as well as conditions of work where women are employed.

Inquiries have been held, special investigations made, and reports written at the request of the Public Service Commissioner or the Head of a Department. One of these was in connection with the charing service, resulting in the removal of an unrest and discontent which has extended over a considerable period and the establishment of a better understanding amongst the members of the staff.

Visits are paid to officers absent from duty more than two days without certificate, absent frequently for one or two days, or absent on long leave when special circumstances indicate that such a visit is desirable. In cases of necessity a certificate is given free of charge.

The amount of sick-leave has been appreciably reduced in certain cases where special circumstances justified the officials in referring the matter to the Medical Officer. In three cases, for instance, where the total leave recommended amounted to eight months, a saving of five months was effected. Undoubtedly very much more could be done in this direction without any injustice to the individuals concerned if, as in New South Wales, all cases of sick-leave and all certificates were referred to the departmental Medical Officers. The Public Service is particularly sympathetic and lenient in cases of illness; but leave of from one to six months is often granted on medical certificates where, in my opinion, the time recommended is unnecessarily long, and is not at all times put to its legitimate use. One large Department makes a rule of sending all certificates to its Medical Officer for scrutiny. Were this a general rule a very great economy would result. The moral effect, too, would be valuable.

Visits have been paid to Auckland, Napier, Christchurch, and Dunedin to investigate and report upon special cases and health matters.

During 1918 the historic epidemic of influenza made severe ravages upon a people totally unprepared to meet it, and the Public Service was no exception to the rule. By the wish of the Public Service Commissioner, sick officers were visited and helped until their numbers made such work impossible; but the organizing of the medical profession, and the work of the local Citizens' Committees, soon brought assistance within reach of all.

Profiting by the sad experience of that time, nursing classes for women, kindly arranged by the Women's National Reserve, were held during 1919, and largely availed of. Volunteers from various Departments were also received into the General Hospital for a short training in nursing.

It was found at that time that many women workers lived alone, or in groups in apartments, with no one responsible for their welfare, and that this led to much distress and suffering. There is great need for the establishment of hostels for women workers living away from home, particularly now when suitable lodging is difficult to find, and when fuel, food, and clothes are so high-priced.

Young girls living away from home, of whom there are many in the Public Service, are surrounded by difficulties and temptations which are detrimental alike to health and to morals, and it behoves us all, especially the Government for which they are working, to afford them every possible measure of help and protection. It is gratifying to note what has already been done by the Public Service Commissioner in the way of encouraging by financial help institutions which provide girls with good lodgings and home surroundings at reasonable cost. The Young Women's Christian Association, for instance, accommodates about sixty Public Service officers during their first year in Wellington, thus giving them time to find suitable lodgings later. In special cases there is no time-limit. Similar arrangements are now being made by the Young Men's Christian Association with regard to lodgings for boys and young men. Such care for the welfare of the junior officers will help to allay the natural anxiety of parents whose girls and boys may be obliged to leave home in order to take advantage of positions in the Public Service. It will also undoubtedly have a beneficial effect upon the health, happiness, and character of the officers themselves.

It must be borne in mind that there are now, and will be in the future, many women who will never be married, and who must rely upon their own efforts for a livelihood. Their conditions of work, therefore, must allow of reasonable comfort during their working life and old age.

The question of shorter hours of work and continuation classes up to the age of sixteen or eighteen years is one that already has a place in the minds of thoughtful citizens, and will be brought prominently forward in the near future. The uppermost idea in the hearts and minds of those who deal with this question as it affects women must be that those concerned, girls between fourteen and sixteen years of age, are the potential wives and mothers of the future, and our endeavour must be to build up in them the physique and the mentality which will best fit them for the great responsibility which is to rest upon them. With the ideal always in our minds we must deal with the actual, and if necessity forces these children out of home life into the groove of the wage-earner we must make the conditions such as will lessen the detriment to their healthy development. The least we can offer is daily healthful exercise during spare time on tennis and fives courts, and in gymnasia