

**WOMEN'S  
Christian Temperance Union  
Of New Zealand.**

Organised 1885.

"For God and Home and Humanity."

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**The White Ribbon.**

For God and Home and Humanity.

WELLINGTON, SEPT. 18, 1916.

**GRAND JURIES ON SEXUAL  
OFFENCES.**

The children of a nation are its best asset. True as this is at all times, its truth is doubly emphasised now. When the nation is giving the pick of its manhood to perish on the battlefields of Europe and Asia, how very important it is that it should conserve its child life. Children, many and vigorous, are the nation's only hope. Every year many little girls, the nation's potential mothers, are abused and ruined by sexual perverts. So serious has the matter become, that at Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch the Grand Juries and Judges spoke strongly on the subject, and asked that the law be amended to give better protection to girls, especially to prevent repetition of the offence. Mr Justice Hosking spoke of the regret that one must feel

that in such cases children were the only witnesses, because it served to emphasise in their mind matters which were best forgotten. Often parents considered it against the best interests of their children to bring such cases into Court.

Women of this Dominion have petitioned and deputationised Ministers, but no action has been taken. We can only hope that the combined voices of Grand Juries and Judges may move a Ministry that mothers, weeping over their ruined little girls, have failed to arouse. Ministers and members waxed eloquent in debate on the need (and we admit it is a need) to protect the soldier boy, an adult, from designing and diseased evil women, but no voice was raised as to the necessity of protecting girls, mostly infants, from the designs of evil and often diseased men.

**To Prevent a Repetition.**

The Grand Jury at Wellington urged a surgical operation, and at Auckland the same thing was hinted at. In some American States this is the law, but it has not been in force long enough for its results to be judged. Now, punishment in these cases must not be vindictive, but preventative. The man who is sexually excited by little girls has no right to be at large among them. The law must, either by an operation or by segregation, render the repetition of such an offence impossible. For stealing property, heavy sentences, often years, are given. For stealing the innocence, and often health of a child, a few months is deemed sufficient punishment. When a man is convicted of a sexual offence he should be detained for medical examination, and such treatment as medical or surgical science recommends, and no man should be set at liberty unless certified by two doctors to be sane and normal sexually, and no menace to the safety of little children. Until so certified, they should be detained, preferably in farm colonies, which could be made self-supporting.

**Children as Witnesses.**

For long we have protested against the enormity of compelling little girls (and older girls too) to give evidence in these cases before men only. Judge, jury, police, lawyers, and all Court officials are men, and the law does not require any woman to be

present. In a Court recently a girl of 14 had to give evidence, pronounced by a Court official "most disgusting," and not one woman was in that Court. For 23 years New Zealand women have voted, and yet we still permit a child of 14 to give evidence before men only of the dastardly ruin wrought upon her by her own father. Why do we not demand what other places have, that women, officials of the Children's Court, hear these stories from children alone, and quietly, and that their sworn evidence is accepted by the Court, instead of forcing the child to appear.

**Women Police.**

The Attorney-General has been repeatedly asked to appoint women police, but his only reply is that he is waiting for reports of their work in other places. These reports, all most favourable, have for several months past been published in our daily papers. A cable announced that the New South Wales Minister considered that the work done by the women police in Sydney justified their appointment, and that he was going to make further appointments. Has the Attorney-General any private evidence differing from this? If so, he should make it public; if not, why does he delay to make appointments? Complaints are made as to the difficulty of getting suitable men for the Police Force in war time. Why not try a few good women?

We pride ourselves upon being a democratic country! Why, then, allow the hide-bound conservatism of one man to delay a reform asked for by all thinking men and women? Women police have proved the greatest protection to girls wherever appointed.

**Age of Protection.**

To what age should children be protected? The W.C.T.U. has always asked for girls to be protected to 21 years of age, and lately the same has been asked for boys. The law does not allow any person to dispose of their property until they reach the age of 21. Why not protect their person to the same age? Is a child's money more valuable than its purity, its innocence, its virtue, its character? The Chief of Police in Sydney said in evidence that all prostitutes known to the police became so before they were 22 years of age. To check the social evil and the nation-destroy-