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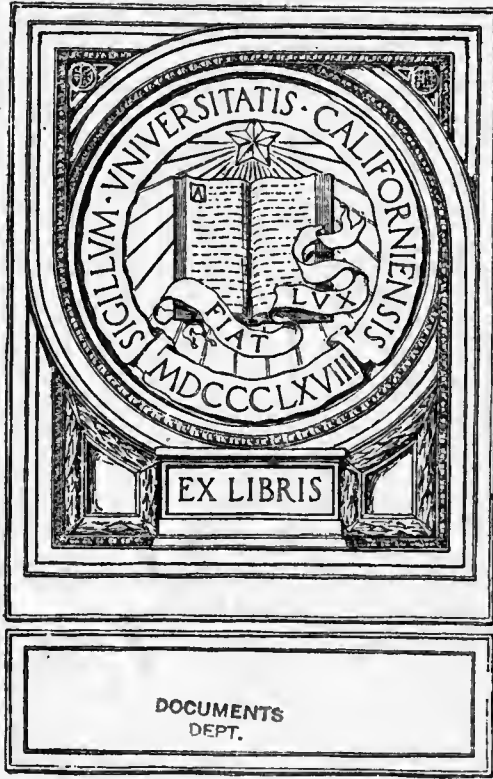
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Gr. Print "SHOPS COMMITTEE."

REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE

APPOINTED BY

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

TO CONSIDER

THE CONDITIONS OF RETAIL TRADE WHICH CAN BEST
SECURE THAT THE FURTHER ENLISTMENT OF MEN
OR THEIR EMPLOYMENT IN OTHER NATIONAL SERVICES
MAY NOT INTERFERE WITH THE OPERATIONS OF
THAT TRADE.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.



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WARRANT OF APPOINTMENT.

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I HEREBY APPOINT :—

CECIL B. HARMSWORTH, Esquire, M.P., Under-Secretary of State
for the Home Department (Chairman),
Miss MARGARET G. BONDFIELD,
RICHARD BURBIDGE, Esquire,
ARTHUR J. GILES, Esquire,
JOHN HINDS, Esquire, M.P.,
J. A. SEDDON, Esquire,
Miss R. E. SQUIRE, of the Home Office, and
U. WOLFF, Esquire, of the Board of Trade,

to be a Committee to consider the conditions of retail trade which can best secure that the further enlistment of men or their employment in other national services may not interfere with the necessary operations of that trade.

(Signed) R. McKENNA.

Whitehall,
22nd March, 1915.

I HEREBY APPOINT :—

S. T. NICHOLSON, Esquire, and
HENRY J. MAY, Esquire,

to be additional members of the Committee appointed to consider the conditions of retail trade which can best secure that the further enlistment of men or their employment in other national services may not interfere with the necessary operations of that trade.

(Signed) R. McKENNA.

Whitehall,
9th April, 1915.

I HEREBY APPOINT :—

A. F. BIRD, Esquire, M.P.,

to be an additional member of the Committee appointed to consider the question of further enlistment in the Distributing Trades.

(Signed) R. McKENNA.

Whitehall,
27th April, 1915.

11.9.20

REPORT.

To the Right Hon. Sir JOHN SIMON, M.P.,
Secretary of State for Home Affairs.

SIR,

ON the 31st March we had the honour to submit to your predecessor, the Right Hon. Reginald McKenna, M.P., an informal Interim Report on the matters referred to us by him in the Warrant of Appointment issued on the 22nd of that month.*

In this Interim Report we gave an account of our proceedings up to date, and we described the method of procedure that we proposed to adopt in fulfilling the duty imposed on us by the terms of our reference. The appointment of the Committee had been preceded by enquiries conducted by a number of H.M. Inspectors of Factories in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Sheffield, Belfast and Dublin.† These enquiries were instituted with a view to discovering approximately what number of men of military age were still in employment in shops, and by what re-adjustments of labour in shops an increased number of eligible men might be released for voluntary service with the Colours or for other Government employment. The enquiries of H.M. Inspectors were necessarily of an informal character, and they were, of course, far from exhaustive, but we have not found it necessary, in the light of wider experience, substantially to modify the general conclusions at which they arrived. The Inspectors' reports showed that where enlistment among shop employees had already taken place, the places rendered vacant had been filled either:—

- (1) only partially (or not at all) owing (a) to slackness of trade, or (b) in some cases to previous over-staffing;
- (2) by men over military age. Often these were salesmen who customarily assist in shops at times of extra pressure;
- (3) by women.

The number of women substitutes who had been taken on appeared to be fairly large, but their employment presented special difficulties in certain trades, such for instance as the ironmongery, furnishing, and certain departments of the drapery and grocery trades, where physical strength is an important consideration.

In order that definite results might ensue from our inquiry we submitted to Mr. McKenna a practical scheme of operation. The central feature of the procedure was to be the issue of a brief form of questions to employers, to be preceded in the various large centres by local conferences. The whole campaign was to be started in London by a representative meeting to be addressed, if possible, by the Prime Minister.

In the main, this procedure has been carried out on the lines suggested by us.

At an early stage in our proceedings we placed ourselves in touch with the great trade associations representing employers and employees, and Sub-Committees of our number met leading employers in different branches of the distributing trades. We are glad to say that throughout our proceedings we have received from the associations and from individual employers active and cordial co-operation in our work. It goes without saying that our proposals for facilitating the release of an increased number of shop workers for enlistment were not calculated to excite the enthusiasm of employers, but we found everywhere a willing disposition to subordinate private convenience to the national needs.

In approaching the distributing trades, which had admittedly already done well in the matter of enlistment, we found it necessary to lay stress on the fact that our inquiry was only part of a general inquiry of a similar nature which the Government were making in respect of the great industries of the country.

We were very careful to remove the impression that we were asking employers to bring any sort of pressure to bear on their employees to join the Colours.

* Meetings of the Committee took place before the Warrant of Appointment was published in the Press.

† As a Committee we have confined our operations to England and Wales. A separate Committee for Scotland has since been appointed by the Secretary for Scotland.

Meetings.

The campaign was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, who on May 4th addressed a meeting at the Westminster Palace Hotel (organised by the Committee) of over 300 representatives of individual firms, trade associations, and trade journals from all parts of the country—perhaps the most important and representative gathering of the distributing trades that has ever been assembled. The following are the trade organisations who were represented at the meeting:—

- The Co-operative Congress, Parliamentary Committee.
- The Dairy Trade Protection Society.
- The Drapers' Chamber of Trade.
- The Early Closing Association.
- The Federation of Grocers' Associations.
- The Incorporated Guild of Hairdressers, Wigmakers, and Perfumers.
- The Ironmongers' Federated Association.
- The Incorporated Society of London Meat Trades.
- The London Chamber of Commerce.
- The London Master Bakers' Protection Society.
- The London and Provincial Retail Newsagents' Association.
- The London and Suburban Traders' Association.
- The National Association of Master Bakers and Confectioners.
- The National Association of Goldsmiths.
- The National Chamber of Trade.
- The National Federation of Meat Traders' Association.
- The Shopkeepers and Small Traders' Protection Society.
- The National Amalgamated Union of Shopkeepers, Warehousemen, and Clerks; and
- The National Association of Grocers' Assistants.

The meeting had a wide publicity. Mr. Asquith's speech was a memorable one, and has been reprinted in pamphlet form and freely distributed at local meetings and to the trade generally.

Subsequently to the London meeting, local meetings were held in fifty-five important centres in England and Wales.* These meetings were (except at Liverpool and Manchester) organised for us by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, in most cases in conjunction with the Mayors (who responded most willingly to a circular letter addressed to them by the Chairman of the Committee), and often with the active assistance of various trades associations. The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee secured at each of the meetings organised by them the services of a speaker of influence, usually a member of Parliament.

The meetings were in most cases local events of considerable importance, and were always fully reported in the local Press. We believe that their effect has not been limited to the particular section of the community to which they were primarily intended to appeal. Resolutions were passed pledging those present to do everything possible in the way of reorganisation so as to release more men.

Questionnaire.

The questionnaire, with a covering circular signed in facsimile by Mr. McKenna and Mr. Walter Runciman,† was distributed in London on the day following the Prime Minister's meeting; in the provinces the distribution was made, as far as possible, in conjunction with the local meetings, where local meetings were held; elsewhere according to circumstances.

The Labour Exchanges have supplied us with the following general figures

* A list of the places is given in Appendix I to the Report.

† The questionnaire and covering circular are printed in Appendix II.

taken from the returned forms. The replies, we understand, represent approximately one-third of the total number of forms sent out :—

Division.	No. of employers furnishing replies.	No. of men of military age employed.	No. of men of military age who can be released.
London and South-Eastern	38,313	52,934	15,652
South-Western	9,537	12,104	2,926
West Midland	7,277	7,042	1,598
York and East Midland	19,774	29,916	7,573
North-Western	3,128	9,868	2,519
Wales	3,735	5,462	1,781
Northern	3,827	6,413	1,760
Total	85,591	123,739	33,809

The above figures do not include the City of Liverpool, where the forms have been distributed by a special committee of shopkeepers which was formed at the suggestion of the Lord Mayor. We have not yet been informed of the final results of this distribution.

The information in regard to the men of military age in employment was passed on by the Labour Exchanges in the various districts to the local recruiting authorities.

The number of employers who promised reinstatement to enlisted men, according to further figures supplied by the Labour Exchanges, was 11,403. We felt that this figure was, as it stood, liable to misinterpretation, and that in view of the vital importance of the question to the employee, a further and more detailed analysis of the replies was necessary in order to discover the true position. We were fortunate in securing the services of a number of capable volunteer workers for the purpose.

From this further analysis it appeared, first of all, that not many more than 22,000 of the 85,591 employers who replied had men of military age in their employment, and it was, of course, only from this section of employers that a reply on the question of reinstatement was expected.

A definite promise to reinstate enlisted men was, therefore, made by over 50 per cent. of the employers concerned. Of the remaining 50 per cent. who did not make the promise, by far the largest number left the question blank; unconditional refusals were very rare. It is likely that many employers were unwilling to commit themselves to a definite guarantee in writing, in view of the great uncertainty of the outlook, and the impossibility of foreseeing what their position would be at the end of the war.

We understand from the War Office that it would not be possible, without laborious research, to obtain any exact figures showing the number of shop assistants recruited since May (when most of the local meetings were held and the large majority of the questionnaire forms sent out). We cannot, therefore, form even an approximate estimate of the concrete results of our appeal.

What we feel we have done is to bring home to shopkeepers in England and Wales the necessity (and the possibility) of re-arranging their businesses so as to release more men for service with the Colours. The general tone of the replies to the questionnaire was indicative of a patriotic readiness to subordinate private to public needs in the national emergency; and we have every reason to think that the practical response has been considerable.

Difficulties of Reorganisation: The Question of Substitutes.

While firmly believing that the possibilities of reorganisation in the distributing trades are wide, we have never supposed that the necessary measures can be carried out without considerable personal inconvenience in a large number of cases. These are times, however, when a measure of personal sacrifice is expected from every citizen. The distributing trades have provided fine examples of patriotism, and the spirit in which we have been met in our enquiry shows clearly that both employers and employed are prepared to take their full share of the burden.

Male labour of any kind is increasingly difficult to obtain, and it is evident that

during the period of the war the major portion of substitutes for enlisted assistants must be women. We have had frequently urged upon us the physical incapacity of women for work involving the handling of heavy goods. This difficulty is one which arises in a greater or less degree in most of the trades concerned, but in the case of no one trade, we believe, does it arise so acutely as to render impracticable the extensive substitution of women for men. In a large number of cases the difficulty has been solved by the employment of a nucleus of men to give assistance with heavy lifting, &c., wherever required.

The scope of female labour is increasing daily; and there are many instances in the distributing as in other trades where women have been introduced into new kinds of work and are acquitting themselves creditably, in many cases altogether beyond expectation. A remarkable instance in point (to quote only one) is the successful employment of women in the work of delivery from motor vans, a possibility which certain of those whom we interviewed early in our inquiry would not admit.

There appears to be no ground for the fear which has been expressed that the introduction of female labour would lead to a lowering of the rate of payment for services.

As regards the supply of female labour: in some districts, particularly in the great manufacturing areas, women assistants may not be readily procurable by the ordinary methods of advertisement. We would recommend to employers generally that they should take increased advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Board of Trade Register of Women for War Service. We understand that a large number of these women have declared their readiness for employment in shop work.

London County Council Training Scheme.

Mention should be made of an interesting experiment which is being carried out by the London County Council, at the Trade School for Girls, Lime Grove, Shepherd's Bush, at the suggestion of the Board of Trade. An attempt is being made to give a course of practical training in grocery salesmanship to a number of women who are willing to undertake the duties in place of men who are now serving with the Colours. At present, the course, which is of six weeks' duration, is limited to thirty women.

The syllabus, which is an exhaustive one, demands the close attendance and effort of the pupils for a considerable number of hours each day during the course. Class rooms are provided for lectures, &c.; but most of the work is of a practical kind and is carried out in an excellently-equipped model grocer's shop. No fees are charged to the pupils.

No doubt many employers, in default of applicants with experience in actual shop work, will prefer to train their own hands from the start; and in any case the experiment described above is too new for us to be able to pronounce definitely as to its ultimate value. Nevertheless, the members of the Committee who have visited the school were impressed with the usefulness of the work done, which, while it could not, of course, take the place of actual experience in a trading establishment, should at any rate provide a practical acquaintance with commodities and methods of handling them which would be of value to an employer in the present difficult circumstances.

Joint Delivery.

We have had before us suggestions for the establishment of systems of joint delivery of goods at fixed times in each district. The idea was, however, objected to by some on the ground that the big stores would take advantage of the curtailment of deliveries to attract customers at the expense of the smaller shopkeepers.

The proposal is hedged about with difficulties which only the trades themselves can remove. Attempts are, however, being made in certain districts to develop the idea, and will be watched with interest.

Attitude of the Public.

We received urgent requests from several sources for the issue of an authoritative appeal to the public to exercise more consideration in their shopping. The Committee accordingly issued such an appeal to the shopping public through the

Press.* The appeal received a warm welcome from the trade and has had a considerable effect. Local reproductions of it in placard, &c. form have been made in various cases.

Separate Sanitary Accommodation.

It was represented to us that the taking on of women would in many establishments—particularly in the smaller shops—involve considerable difficulty in complying with the requirements of the Public Health Acts in regard to separate sanitary accommodation for each sex. Similar difficulties have, we ascertained, arisen in the case of factories and workshops, and have been satisfactorily settled in many cases by special temporary arrangements (*e.g.*, for the use of a convenience in a neighbouring house or of a public convenience near by) with the approval of the Inspector of Factories. We consulted accordingly with the Local Government Board, who issued a circular on the 14th June to local Sanitary Authorities suggesting that they should be careful to consider each case of the kind on its merits, and consider whether some temporary arrangements of the kind mentioned above could not be made in suitable instances in order to assist employers who have already been put to inconvenience through the enlistment of their male assistants.

Early Closing.

This extremely difficult question has been raised from several quarters. It seems to be the case that a general adoption of earlier closing hours would be acceptable; and, in view of the very largely increased numbers of women now working in shops, a shorter period of employment is clearly to be desired.

It has been suggested that the State should take action by fixing universal hours of closing throughout the country, or by enabling local authorities to make closing, &c. orders more summarily than they are allowed to do under the existing law. It must be remembered, however, that the Government would naturally require a very strong and representative demand from all classes of distributing traders before they could be expected to consider the introduction of any such legislation.

Apart from emergency legislation, it is possible for shopkeepers to take matters into their own hands, either (*a*) by voluntary agreement among themselves locally, or (*b*) in conjunction with the local authorities, by taking increased advantage of the existing arrangements for making orders under the Shops Act. Both of these expedients have been adopted to a certain extent, it appears; but as regards (*b*), we are informed by the Home Office that the number of closing orders made under the Shops Act has not increased since the beginning of the war. Local authorities are themselves labouring under considerable difficulties, and are probably not very ready to embark on the procedure required by the Shops Act for making closing orders, unless they are assured in advance that the requisite majority exists. We understand further from the Home Office that enquiries which they have made from local authorities in certain important centres seem to show that while there is in many places a desire on the part of the shopkeepers generally for earlier closing, some opposition may be expected from the smaller shopkeepers (who are dependent on their evening trade) to general closing orders, or any legislative measure giving increased facilities for bringing about early closing.

Proposals were also made to us for closing during the dinner hour, a scheme which is already in operation by voluntary arrangement in a number of places.

The Wholesale Trades.

We formed the opinion early in our proceedings that our inquiry should embrace the wholesale as well as the retail distributing trades, and we have had the benefit of interviews with the managers of certain leading wholesale firms.

In the wholesale trades, as in the retail, there are many openings for women's employment outside the actual moving of heavy goods. We find that in several large establishments women have been taken on extensively for the clerical work in all departments, and for general employment in connection with such lighter goods as fancy furnishing, silks, baby-linen, flowers, &c. In London, at any rate, this has resulted in the freeing of a very remarkable number of men from the wholesale warehouses for enlistment in the Forces.

* See Appendix III.

Scottish Committee.

We were able at the end of May, when our procedure was practically complete, to put our experience and information at the disposal of the Committee appointed by the Secretary for Scotland to consider the same problems, in their relation to Scotland, as have been inquired into by us in respect of England and Wales.

Future Problems.

We would suggest, for your consideration, that we should continue in being as a Committee, in order to deal, if necessary, with any new and urgent problems that may arise in the distributing industry as a result of the war.

General.

We wish to put on record our great obligation to the trades organisations who have assisted and co-operated with us in the course of our inquiry; to the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (and particularly to Mr. Arthur Peters, the Meetings Secretary), and the Lord Mayors and Mayors, who summoned the local meetings for us; to the Labour Exchanges Department of the Board of Trade, who carried out the distribution of the questionnaire to some hundreds of thousands of shopkeepers in England and Wales; and to the ladies and gentlemen who undertook for us the further analysis of the replies to the questionnaire; the services of the ladies were kindly secured for us by the Secretary of the Women's Emergency Corps, of which they were members.

In conclusion, we desire to express our warm appreciation of the services rendered by our Secretary, Mr. M. H. Whitelegge. In the earlier stages of our enquiry, and throughout the period when we were actively prosecuting our campaign of enlistment in the distributing trades, we were obliged to make heavy demands on Mr. Whitelegge's time and on his energies. It is not too much to say that the success of our efforts has been due in large measure to his skill in organisation, and generally to his unremitting devotion to the work of the Committee.

We have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servants,

(Signed) CECIL HARMSWORTH.
MARGARET G. BONDFIELD.
ROSE E. SQUIRE.
ALFRED F. BIRD.
R. BURBIDGE.
ARTHUR J. GILES.
JOHN HINDS.
HENRY J. MAY.
S. T. NICHOLSON.
J. A. SEDDON.
U. WOLFF.

October, 1915.

M. H. WHITELEGGE.
Secretary.

APPENDIX I.

LIST OF PLACES IN WHICH THE LOCAL MEETINGS WERE HELD.

Aberdare.	Derby.	Norwich.
Ashton-under-Lyne.	Dewsbury.	Nottingham.
Barrow.	Doncaster.	Oxford.
Bath.	Dudley.	Plymouth.
Birkenhead.	Eastbourne.	Preston.
Birmingham.	Exeter.	Reading.
Blackburn.	Gateshead.	Rotherham.
Blackpool.	Grimsby.	Sheffield.
Bournemouth.	Halifax.	Smethwick.
Bradford.	Hastings.	Southport.
Brighton.	Huddersfield.	Stockton.
Burnley.	Hull.	Torquay.
Cambridge.	Leigh.	Warrington.
Cardiff.	Liverpool.	Worcester.
Chatham.	Luton.	West Hartlepool.
Cheltenham.	Manchester.	Yarmouth.
Chester.	Merthyr Tydfil.	York.
Coventry.	Middlesbrough.	
Darlington.	Northampton.	

APPENDIX II.

CIRCULAR AND QUESTIONNAIRE ISSUED TO SHOPKEEPERS IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

A.

THE CIRCULAR.

Whitehall, S.W.,
April, 1915.

SIR,

IN immediate response to Lord Kitchener's demand for "more men, and yet more men," in order that the War may be brought to a successful conclusion at the earliest possible moment, inquiries are being conducted in various trades with a view to facilitating the release of a larger number of men for military service or for employment in other national services.

Amongst other Committees set up to deal with this subject is the Shops Committee appointed to consider the circumstances of the Wholesale and Retail Distributing Trades. We are aware, and we warmly recognise the fact, that these Trades have already contributed a very large number of men to the new Armies, but the inquiries made by the Shops Committee lead us to believe that a considerable number of employees of military age in these Trades is still available for enlistment.

The inquiries of the Committee show further that where men have left their employment in these Trades for service with the Colours their places have been filled temporarily, so far as they have been filled at all, by the engagement of men over military age and by the employment of women. The Committee advise us that by a wider extension of this process the number of men available for enlistment could be very greatly increased. The Board of Trade has established a Register of Women for War Service with the object of assisting employers in various industries to fill vacancies. Large numbers of women have already been enrolled and classified, and many who have had experience of shop-work are offering their services.

In a great number of cases in the Distributing and other Trades a guarantee has been given by the employer that the places of enlisted men will be kept open for them. It will no doubt be generally regarded as of great importance in the interests of recruiting that an undertaking of the kind should be given.

The national situation demands imperatively that a prompt and full response should be made to Lord Kitchener's appeal for more men. The Government realise that this response involves much personal sacrifice, but it is a sacrifice that this country has never failed to undergo cheerfully in the hour of national need. The Committee hope that in the special circumstances you will consent to fill in the enclosed form with a view to the information being made available for the use of the Recruiting Authority for your district.

Yours faithfully,

R. McKenna
Walter Crumman

B.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

Please fill in and return (post free) in the Enclosed Envelope within Seven Days.

Men of military age (19 to 38) still employed _____

Number that could be released _____

Would you require substitutes? If so, whether—

(a) Women _____

(b) Men over military age _____

Are you willing to guarantee reinstatement, if it is desired, to enlisted men _____

OBSERVATIONS.

(Signed) _____

Address _____

Trade _____

N.B.—Owing to alterations in the physical standards previous rejection by the Military Authorities does not necessarily imply unfitness for military service.

APPENDIX III.

THE COMMITTEE'S "APPEAL TO THE SHOPPING PUBLIC" (ISSUED THROUGH THE PRESS).

Home Office,
Whitehall, S.W.,
24th May, 1915.

SIR,

AS the Prime Minister stated in his recent speech at the Westminster Palace Hotel, the Distributing Trades have already contributed a very large number of men to the various national services, and it is hoped that a still greater number will be forthcoming in the near future in response to the further appeal of the Military Authorities.

It is no easy matter for employers to replace their enlisted assistants; and it is therefore clearly unreasonable to expect the same efficiency and promptitude in serving customers as before the war.

We appeal to the shopping public to co-operate with employers and their assistants in the patriotic efforts they are making, by complying with the following suggestions:—

1. Shop as early as possible in the day.
2. Do not expect immediate service during busy hours.
3. Carry home small purchases. Where goods cannot be conveniently taken home, give the option of delivery on the following day.
4. Send orders *in writing* where practicable, and as long as possible in advance.

The public have so far shown themselves very willing to make those sacrifices of personal convenience which are incumbent on every citizen at this time of national crisis, and we are confident that our appeal will meet with a cheerful response.

We are, Sir,

Your obedient Servants,

The "Shops Committee."

CECIL HARMSWORTH (Chairman).

MARGARET A. BONDFIELD.

ROSE E. SQUIRE.

ALFRED BIRD.

R. BURBIDGE.

ARTHUR J. GILES.

JOHN HINDS.

HENRY J. MAY.

S. T. NICHOLSON.

J. A. SEDDON.

U. WOLFF.



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